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Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Fifth periodic report of States parties

Iceland*

* For the combined initial and second periodic report submitted by the Government of Iceland see CEDAW/C/ICE/1-2, considered by the Committee at its fifteenth session. For the combined third and fourth periodic report submitted by the Government of Iceland, see CEDAW/C/ICE/3-4, considered by the Committee at its twenty-sixth session. This report is being issued without formal editing.

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The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Fifth report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Submitted by
THE GOVERNMENT OF ICELAND
Ministry of Social Affairs
(for the period 1st January 1998 to 31st March 2003)

Part I
Article 1

In its concluding comments on the Third and Forth Periodic Reports of the Icelandic Government, the Committee on Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women notes with concern that the Convention has not been incorporated into domestic legislation. In particular, it regrets that Article 1 of the Convention, which defines "discrimination against women" is not part of Icelandic legislation.

Concerning this comment, the Icelandic Government would like to emphasise that extensive amendments were made to the human rights provisions of the Icelandic Constitution in 1995 by the Constitutional Act No. 97/1995. Several changes were made to provisions concerning economic, social and cultural rights in the Constitution and some new rights were added. An important provision, the principle of equality, was added to the Constitution. Article 65 of the Constitution reads as follows:

"All persons shall be equal before the law and enjoy human rights without regard to sex, religion, opinion, national origin, race, colour, financial status, parentage and other status.

Men and women shall have equal rights in every respect."

It should be noted that in the explanatory report to the bill amending the Constitution, clear reference is made to international conventions in the field of human rights as guiding principles on how the constitution should be interpreted. For example, concerning the Article 65 of the Constitution reference is made to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The fact is that in the recent years, the influence of international human rights conventions has increased significantly within the Icelandic legal system and the application of Icelandic law. It can be stated that the new human rights provisions in the Constitution have widened the constitutional protection of various rights guaranteed in international human rights conventions. This has been manifested in various judgments of the Supreme Court and other courts, which refer increasingly to international human rights conventions when applying and interpreting Icelandic law. Despite the fact that these conventions do not have the direct force of law within the Icelandic legal system, they have now been brought under the dimension of constitutional protection according to court practice where the constitutional provisions are interpreted in the light of international obligations. Accordingly, references to Article 65 of the Constitution concerning the principle of equality have also increased considerably, in relation to all human rights.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women has never been invoked before domestic courts. In one case though, the interpretation of the Convention has been referred to the Equal Status Complaints Committee. This was Case No 6/1996, against the Minister of Justice, involving the citizenship of a child of an Icelandic mother who had been married to a man with a foreign citizenship. According

to the former legislation, there was a difference in the legal status of children born in wedlock of Icelandic parents depending on their gender.

It should be mentioned that following the constitutional amendments and the practice of the courts in the recent years, a lively debate and public awareness of human rights has awakened in Icelandic society. Accordingly, people in Iceland are better informed of their rights than before, and know that these rights are enforceable through the Icelandic legal system and international monitoring bodies.

As was stated in the Additional information to the Iceland's Third and Fourth Periodic Reports, a new Act on the Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men (hereafter referred to as Gender Equality Act) entered into force in June 2000. A general prohibition against discrimination is laid down in Article 22 of the Act. This states that any type of discrimination on the basis of gender, either direct or indirect, is prohibited. However, special temporary measures taken to improve the status of women or men, for the purpose of ensuring equality and the equal status of men and women, are not to be considered as being in violation of the Act. The same applies to measures taken to increase the opportunity of women or men specifically to promote equality, and the equal status of men and women. It is also stated that it is not to be considered discriminatory to make special allowances for women due to pregnancy or the birth of a child.

The Regulations No. 47/2003, on the functions of the Centre for Gender Equality, were issued to complement the Act No. 96/2000. They contain a special section prohibiting discrimination, reiterating the provisions of Article 22 of the Act and defining direct and indirect discrimination. Articles 15 and 16 of the Regulations read as follows:

"Art. 15

Direct discrimination.

Direct discrimination shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of gender which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by the other sex of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

Art.16

Indirect discrimination.

Indirect discrimination exists where a neutral provision, criterion or practice disadvantages a substantially higher proportion of the members of one sex, unless it is appropriate, necessary or can be justified by objective factors unrelated to sex."

Article 15 of the Regulations No. 47/2003 is based on the wording of Article 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Government wishes to emphasise that in this provision, the definition in the Convention of direct discrimination has become part of Icelandic law. The definition of indirect discrimination is modelled on Council Directive 97/80/EC on the burden of proof in cases of

discrimination based on sex. It should be mentioned that the Act applies to public authorities as well as the private sector and individuals.

The Icelandic Government accepted the amendments to Art. 20, para. 1, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in May 2002.

Article 2

Subparagraphs a) and b)

Legislation on Gender Equality

Iceland has had a special law intended to ensure equality between women and men and their equal status in all respects since 1976. The new Act of 2000 revoked the former Gender Equality Act, No. 28/1991.

As was stated in the Additional Information to the Iceland's Third and Fourth Periodic Reports, the Act was revised for two main reasons: on the one hand to take account of the changes that had occurred in the field of gender equality and changes of emphasis in projects and methodology, and on the other to stimulate development towards equality in important areas in society. When the Act was revised, therefore, attention was given to the situation regarding gender equality in the administration and the definition of specific projects to work on. It was also emphasized that gender equality must be taken seriously as the responsibility of both women and men.

The Centre for Gender Equality

The Act established a special new institution, the Centre for Gender Equality (Jafnréttisstofa, called the Equal Status Bureau in the Act), which is administered by the Ministry of Social Affairs and is entrusted with the monitoring of the application of the Act. The new institution has taken over most of the tasks of the former Equal Status Bureau. Its tasks include to:

- provide education and information,
- provide counselling for the authorities, institutions, companies, individuals and non-governmental organizations,
- provide suggestions and proposals on activities in the matters of gender equality to the Minister of Social Affairs, the Gender Equality Council and other authorities,
- increase activity in matters of gender equality, i.a. by increased participation of men in such activities,
- monitor the developments of the society in matters of equality, i.a. through the gathering of information and research,
- provide assistance to gender equality committees, gender equality counsellors and the gender equality representatives of local authorities, institutions and companies,
- undertake other tasks consistent with the aim and scope of the Act as further instructed by the Minister.

Public institutions, employers and non-governmental organizations are obliged to provide the Centre for Gender Equality with general information which it may need for its operations. In special circumstances the Centre for Gender Equality may initiate legal proceedings to obtain recognition of the rights of the plaintiff on the basis of the Complaints Committee on Gender Equality's opinions.

The Gender Equality Council

The Gender Equality Council is a nine-member council, appointed by the Minister of Social Affairs. The chairperson is appointed without nomination. The Icelandic Confederation of Labour, the Confederation of State and Municipal Employees, the Ministry of Finance, the University of Iceland, the Federation of Icelandic Women's Associations, the Women's Rights Association of Iceland, the Confederation of Icelandic Employers and the National Association of Local Authorities in Iceland shall nominate one member each. The parties shall, when possible, nominate one man and one woman for each seat on the Gender Equality Council, giving the opportunity of appointing an approximately equal number of women and men. The Council shall make systematic efforts to equalize the status and the right of women and men in the labour market and shall submit proposals to the Minister of Social Affairs on measures to be taken in this field.

Gender equality coordinators

In addition to these structural changes, each Ministry is required to appoint a gender equality coordinator who shall monitor activities in matters of gender equality within the sphere of the ministry and the institutions working under the auspices of the ministry. The coordinators shall give the Centre for Gender Equality an annual report containing the ministry's activities.

Statistics

In the production of official statistics on individuals and in interviews and opinion surveys information shall be collected, compiled, analysed and presented on the basis of gender unless specific circumstances, such as protection of privacy, prevent this.

Gender equality programmes

There is a provision stating that institutions and enterprises with more than 25 employees are to set themselves gender equality programmes or to make special provisions regarding gender equality in their employment policies.

Discrimination on the basis of gender

The Act prohibits discrimination of all types, direct or indirect, on grounds of gender. Indirect discrimination is considered to exist where an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice disadvantages a

substantially higher proportion of the members of one sex, unless that provision, criterion or practice is appropriate and necessary and can be justified by objective factors unrelated to gender. Employers are not permitted to discriminate between their employees as regards wages or other terms on the grounds of gender. The same applies to promotion, continuing education, vocational training, study leave, working conditions and other matters.

Under Article 25 of the Gender Equality Act, an employee who seeks redress on the basis of the Act may not be dismissed for that reason. The employer shall also ensure that no employee is subjected to injustice in his/her occupation, e.g. regarding safety and health at work, working terms or the assessment of his/her performance, due to the fact that he/she has complained about sexual harassment or discrimination on the basis of gender. If evidence is presented of direct or indirect discrimination due to sex, the employer shall be obliged to prove that other reasons than sex was the main consideration in the decision. The same applies if the employer is in breach of Article 25 on prohibition of dismissal, in which case he/she has to demonstrate that the dismissal or alleged injustice was not based on the employee's demand for redress or his/her charge concerning sexual harassment or other gender discrimination. This rule will not apply if the dismissal is made more than a year from the time of the employee's demand for redress on the basis of the Act.

Anyone who, deliberately or through negligence, violates the Act No. 96/2000, shall be liable for damages under general rules. Furthermore, under Article 28, the party in question may be ordered to pay compensation for non-financial loss, in addition to any financial loss, to the injured party, if applicable. Under Article 29, violation of the Act may be punished by fines to be paid to the State Treasury.

Subparagraph c)

Gender Equality Complaints Committee

The Gender Equality Complaints Committee consists of three lawyers appointed by the Minister of Social Affairs; the Supreme Court of Iceland appoints two, including the chairperson and the vice-chairperson. The role of the Complaints Committee is to consider and issue in writing a substantiated opinion on whether the provisions of the Gender Equality Act have been violated. The Committee's opinion shall not be subject to appeals to a higher authority.

Individuals and non-governmental organizations, in their own name or on behalf of their members, who consider that they have been subjected to violations of this law, may seek redress with the Gender Equality Complaints Committee. Under special circumstances, the Complaints Committee is permitted to consider cases referred to it by others. Most of the complaints brought before the committee pertain to alleged discrimination in the labour market, including employment, employment termination or wages.

The conclusions of the Committee are not binding on the relevant parties; instead the Committee presents arguments for improvements, i.e., if it is of the opinion that a certain action is in breach of the provisions of law. The Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is

concerned that the decisions of the Complaints Committee are not binding, inter alia, in cases where government agencies violate the law. The main reason for this situation is that this is a special executive committee that exists for the purpose of hearing complaints between private parties on the basis of the Gender Equality Act; it was therefore felt inappropriate to make its decisions binding for the parties since it was not actually a court of law. Furthermore it was thought necessary to observe equality between parties so that those complaining about actions taken by public bodies or companies were not treated in a different way from those who complained about decisions taken by private parties. The same situation applies to complaints committees that function under other legislation and deal with disputes between private parties, e.g. the Multi-Owner Buildings Complaints Committee. Other considerations apply in the case of complaints committees that deliver rulings on the validity of decisions taken by other government authorities, e.g. the Social Services Complaints Committee and the Planning and Building Complaints Committees. It is always possible to refer disputes directly to the courts without first submitting them to the Gender Equality Complaints Committee, so obtaining a binding judgement. Parties to disputes can apply to a special Legal Aid committee if they consider they are unable to meet the expenses likely to be involved in bringing their cases before the courts.

According to the former Act, the Committee could, in very special cases, file a complaint in court for acknowledgement of the rights of the party in question. According to the new Act the Centre for Gender Equality has the same authorization. The reason for the change was that it was not thought to be defensible in the public administration that the Committee should first take independent decision in a case and then be the plaintiff in the same case before the courts.

The Gender Equality Complaints Committee received eleven cases in 1998. The Committee's opinion was that in nine cases the provisions of the law had been violated. Two cases were not considered to constitute a violation of the law. In 1999 the Committee received twenty-two cases. It considered thirteen cases as constituting violations of the Gender Equality Act; four cases were not considered so. One case was considered not applicable and four were retracted. In the year 2000 the Committee received eight cases. Five were considered as constituting violations of the Gender Equality Act; two were not considered so. One case was settled. In 2001 the Committee received five cases. One was considered a violation of the Gender Equality Act; two were not. One case was retracted and one was dismissed. In 2002 eleven cases were received. Two were considered as constituting violations of the Gender Equality Act, seven were not. One case was dismissed, and one has not been completed.

From 1998 to 2000 the Complaints Committee filed one case in Court, based on the Committee's opinion. Two other related cases, all concerning gender pay-gap issues, were filed by the women concerned. All three rulings fell in the plaintiffs' favour. Since 2000 the Centre for Gender Equality has initiated legal proceedings in one case, two were filed by the women concerned and one by the respective trade union. All other cases have been settled between the employer and the employee, through a negotiation process following an opinion from the Complaints Committee. The Centre for Gender Equality offers active support in these negotiation processes.

National Courts

During the period from 1 January 1997 to 31 December 2002, the Supreme Court delivered judgement in twelve cases dealing with gender equality. Five of them concerned alleged violations of the Gender Equality Act on making engagements to employment. In three cases, the defendant was acquitted of the plaintiff's demands, and in two the court considered that violations had taken place.

In Case No. 46/1998, the Supreme Court found that considerations of equality had not been observed in the engagement of a regional veterinary officer. The plaintiff and the person who was employed were compared in terms of qualifications, and the plaintiff was considered to be the better qualified. Furthermore, it was known at the time that there were fewer women than men working as regional veterinary officers. The plaintiff, a woman, was therefore awarded compensation in view of the estimated financial loss that it was considered likely she had suffered through not receiving the job in question. In determining the compensation amount, consideration was given to the difference between her wages and those of the regional veterinary officer, both calculated and estimated, during the period from 1 April 1994 to 31 December 1998. The judges did not consider she had suffered non-pecuniary loss in this connection; this was based partly on the fact that she applied for, and was awarded, another position as a regional veterinary officer.

Case No. 224/1998 concerned the granting of the position of Director of the Reykjavik Churchyards. Thirteen of the 33 applicants appeared to be competent to do the job, and were invited for interviews with the management of the Reykjavik Churchyards. The outcome of these interviews was that the names of five applicants, including that of the plaintiff, were to be submitted to the board of the Reykjavík Churchyards. None the less, the managing board decided that the applicant was not to be one of those between whom the choice was to be decided by voting; the board had previously decided that the final choice of the person to fill the position was to be made by a vote at one of its general meetings. The court found that in this way, discrimination in the sense of the Gender Equality Act had been practised against the plaintiff in connection with the engagement to the position. On the other hand, the decision of the board to have the choice of applicant determined by a vote was not considered to be a violation of the aforementioned act, as it did not release the defendant from the general requirement to observe equality of the type that the act is designed to protect. As it was not possible to state what the outcome of the voting would have been if the requirements of the act regarding the applicants' gender had been observed, the court did not consider it was possible to award the plaintiff compensation on the grounds that she did not receive the position due to a violation of the Gender Equality Act. Thus, the defendant was acquitted of her compensation demand.

During the period in question, three Supreme Court judgements were delivered on the division of pension rights between couples when their financial affairs were divided at divorce. In Case No. 253/2001 of 18 December 2001, the Court did not accept a woman's demand to be awarded half of the value of her husband's pension rights under the Marriage Act. The couple divorced after a marriage lasting nearly 34 years. The woman had a disability rating of 75% and had not worked outside the home; she had taken care of the home and the

children. The man had worked as a labourer and machine-minder, retiring at the age of 70 in autumn 2000. The Supreme Court made a comparison of the parties' income, in which the man's income consisted of his old age pension and the woman's of her disability pension from the State Social Security Institute. The Court took the view that when assessing whether pension rights should be excluded from the division of the couple's financial affairs, it was necessary to take a comprehensive view of the parties' circumstances as they actually were. The Court referred to the explanatory documents to the Marriage Act, which stated that in individual cases it could be unfair to exclude individual rights from the division, and took the view that special reasons would have to obtain to include them in the division. The Court's view was that it had not been demonstrated that it was unfair to exclude the husband's pension rights from the division of the couple's joint finances.

In its judgement in Case No. 170/2002, of 26 April 2002, on the other hand, it was considered unfair to exclude the husband's pension rights when making a division of the couple's finances. The Supreme Court based this view on the district court judgement in the same case. In its judgement, the district court referred to Case No. 253/2001, with its statement of the principle that it was necessary to take a comprehensive view of the parties' circumstances as they actually were and that in some cases it could be unfair to exclude pension rights from the division. The parties in this case had been living together for 18 years, for 15 of which they had been married. During this time the wife had looked after the home and cared for their children. The husband, on the other hand, was in a secure job, with a high salary, and if circumstances did not change, he would have earned himself substantial pension rights by the age of 65. Taking all these circumstances into consideration, the court considered it unfair to exclude the husband's pension rights from the division. When it determined the sum to which the wife was entitled, the Court took into consideration the advantage involved in the fact that her share of the husband's pension rights took the form of a lump-sum payment. Moreover, the Supreme Court took the view that the woman's age should be taken into account, and also the opportunities that she could be assumed to avail herself of to acquire pension rights of her own.

Finally, the Supreme Court delivered judgement in Case No. 445/2002 on 10 October 2002, finding that part of the husband's pension rights should be considered as the common property of the couple, and therefore be divided between him and his wife according to the general rules applying to the separation of finances at divorce. As in the cases described above, a comprehensive assessment was made of the parties' circumstances as they actually were. This having been done, the Court did not consider that there were grounds for the husband's entire pension entitlement being kept separate from the division of the estate.

One should exercise caution when drawing conclusions from the judgements described above; nevertheless it is clear that the Icelandic courts have recognized that in special cases it may be unfair to exclude the pension rights of one spouse from the an estate that is being divided at divorce. This applies particularly when one of the spouses has not worked outside the home during the couple's marriage or cohabitation.

Subparagraphs d–g)

The Icelandic Government has taken systematic steps to introduce and promote gender equality in all areas of society (*cf.* Article 1 of the Gender Equality Act, No. 96/2000.) All individuals are to have equal possibilities to benefit from their own efforts and develop their abilities, independent of their gender. Much has been achieved in recent years but the Government is fully aware that additional effort has to be made.

Amongst other measures, the Government has run four-year action plans; under Article 9 of the Gender Equality Act, the Minister of Social Affairs shall present to Parliament within one year of parliamentary elections, a motion for a parliamentary resolution on a programme on equality issues after having received proposals made by the various ministries and the Centre for Gender Equality. This programme includes a detailed plan of action and an estimate of the funding needed for individual projects on equality issues.

At the moment there are many official committees at work mapping the gender situation and setting the agenda for the future. The Centre for Gender Equality, in cooperation with the coordinators in the ministries, among others, has begun preparation for a new action plan, for the years 2004 – 2008. Even more emphasis will be put on mainstreaming ideology and methods, activating the ministries and their bodies in the work for equality and non-discrimination. In this respect it has been thought necessary to increase the involvement of men in equality issues, because gender equality is a matter for both women and men.

The Government's policy has been to have legislation non-gender-specific, and those involved in compiling government bills on legislation have been urged to take account of this. It should be mentioned specifically that the Penal Code, No. 19/1940, with subsequent amendments, contains no gender bias.

Article 3

Article 65 of the Constitution and the Gender Equality Act, No. 96/2000, prohibit all discrimination on the basis of gender (*cf.* also the Regulations No. 47/2003). Furthermore, gender equality is further emphasised in the Executive Procedure Act, No. 37/1993, which states the basic principle that when handling a case, government authorities are to ensure consistency and equality in the legal context. It is specifically stated that when resolving cases, it is prohibited to discriminate between parties on the basis of a position based on their gender. The executive includes, *inter alia*, the social services, the health system, the social security system and the educational system.

Action programme on gender equality

The authorities play a significant role in countering traditional views on gender and gender roles. Since 1992, Parliament has passed three four-year action programmes on measures to implement gender equality. Following the parliamentary elections in 2003, a new programme will take effect in 2004. In view of this a decision was made in 2001 on extending the present Action programme (1998-2001) for two years (2002-2003) and using the opportunity to focus on gender mainstreaming methods. This was further supported by the fact that

some of the projects to be carried out were unfinished or needed updating. The revised edition was presented to Parliament in April 2002.

The overall conclusion of the last report, which was submitted to Parliament's session in 2001-2002, is that the programme had had considerable effect in almost all fields of action. For example, the proportion of women in the police force and among prison warders rose; one of the projects of the Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs was to engage more women as police and prison warders during the time-span of the programme. In 1996, women accounted for 4.3% of the national police force; in 2001 the number of women had increased to 8.02%. In 1997, women who graduated from the Police Training Collage were 7.14% of the total. This number has steadily increased and in the spring of 2001, 16.13% of the graduates were women. In 1996, 7.7% of prison guards in the correction facilities were women; in 2001 this ratio had increased to 15.6%. This has mainly been done by encouraging women to apply for new posts within the system.

Another example that can be attributed to some extent to the action programme is the sphere of women's participation in politics. The programme allowed for the establishment of a committee to investigate ways of increasing women's activity and participation in general political work. In September 1998, the Minister of Social Affairs appointed a committee to increase women's participation in politics. After the elections in 1995, women's representation in the parliament, the Althingi, was 25%. The committee functioned until January 2003 and the objectives were mainly to educate, manage/conduct information campaigns and publishing. The first task of the committee was to work to increase the number of women in Parliament in the elections of 1999. After the elections, 35% of members of the Parliament were women. The committee then worked to increase the number of women in local government. Elections were held in May 2002 and the percentage of women in local government rose from 28.5% to 31% (see also the discussion of the work of the committee in item *a* of Article 7).

The programme for the period 1998–2001 also contained a special provision on a statistical project designed to implement the Government's decision that data in all statistical summaries and reports should be analyzed by gender. Two years after the Althingi approved the action programme, it was decided to put the following special provision on statistical analyses in the Gender Equality Act, No. 96/2000:

> "In the production of official statistics on individuals and in interview and opinion surveys, information shall be collected, compiled, analysed and presented on the basis of gender unless specific circumstances such as protection of privacy argue against this."

One of the projects undertaken in the Ministry of Industry and Commerce under the programme of action for 1998-2001 was the establishment of a committee to investigate whether there was a need for special support for women's business projects. The committee published its report, "Women's business activity" (*Atvinnurekstur kvenna*) in autumn 1998. The report contains comprehensive information on the status of women in business and their working conditions and lists specified support services that have been established in Iceland for businesswomen. The main finding of the committee was that support for women's businesses is also important from a gender-equality and family perspective, as it

encourages women's involvement in business activity and may contribute to slowing down the process of depopulation of provincial areas. A working group appointed by the Minister of Industry and Commerce initiated an association for women in business. The association was founded in April 1999. The main objectives and purpose of the association are to work towards partnership and networking between women in business and to establish a target group to work with banks and other loan funds and institutions.

The revised Programme (2002-2003) is supposed to implement mainstreaming in all spheres of society. This will be done through special projects and with the appointment of gender equality coordinators in the ministries. The programme started with the following three projects to be carried out during the two years:

1. Statistical analysis

Under this project, ministries and other government bodies are to follow Article 21 of the Gender Equality Act on the analyzing by gender of statistical data. Statistics Iceland is to monitor compliance with this provision in collaboration with the Centre for Gender Equality.

2. Committee to monitor compliance with gender equality in public policymaking

The Prime Minister's office appointed a committee with the task of gathering information on whether and how gender equality policies are observed in all governmental and local authorities' plans and actions. The committee's report was published in November 2002. The main conclusions were that the authorities show an obvious will to ensure gender equality.

The committee made the following recommendations:

- More emphasis should be placed on education on gender equality and gender mainstreaming for public employees.
- The ministries' gender equality coordinators should assume a more significant role and all ministries should set up gender equality plans.
- The Association of Local Authorities should encourage local authorities to fulfil their duties by law, by appointing gender equality committees and undertaking programmes on matters of gender equality.
- A gender equality guide/index should be published to ensure mainstreaming.
- The government's Action Programme on Gender Equality should be evaluated by an independent party.

3. Committee on women's economic power

In October 2000 the Prime Minister appointed a committee of three specialists in order to create a plan for research projects on women's economic situation and power. According to the committee's suggestions four research projects are being carried out:

- Statistical analysis. Gendered statistics will be gathered showing the situation and influenc women in the Icelandic economy in comparison to men's.
- A study on the gender pay gap on the Icelandic labour market. The study was mad cooperation with the Gender Equality Council and the results were presented in September 2 (see further discussion under Article 11, subparagraph d).
- A study on the situation of women in managerial positions. Information is to be gathered or number of women and men as managers in Icelandic firms, both private and public.
- General opinion survey. The plan is to carry out a survey on the opinion of Icelandic peopl various matters that can influence women's economic situation and influence in decision-ma in Iceland.

The projects listed above are of a general nature and concern the activities of all the government minist Below follow descriptions of projects administered as part of the functions of individual ministries; as there many such projects, this is not an exhaustive list.

Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs

a. The gender status in the police

This is a continuation of the previous campaign to increase the number of women in the police, particular emphasis on increasing their numbers in senior positions. Women are rapidly coming to form a hi proportion of students in the Police College; they have been especially encouraged to enter the college and will in all likelihood raise the number of women in the police force in the course of time. In additio encouraging an increase in the number of women in the force, the Ministry of Justice will also be giving sp attention to the status of policewomen.

b. The status of women in the church

The Minister of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs requested the Bishop's Office to address and examin status of women within the National Church. In 1998 the Church Assembly passed a Gender Equality Plan took effect on 1 January 1999. The Assembly appointed a Gender Equality Committee, which began operatio the same time as the plan took effect. The main emphasis of the plan is as follows:

1. To correct the gender imbalance within the Church.
2. To equalize the representation of men and women in the boards and committees in the Nat Church.
3. To work towards equal pay for women and men in the Church.
4. To raise awareness of gender equality issues.
5. To revise the use of language in church practice.

c. Equality – Human rights

The Ministry of Justice will place emphasis on raising public awareness of women's rights. Such education will be integrated into general education on human rights issues and the importance of the Convention on the Elimination of All Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) will be stressed.

d. Prostitution – Trafficking

In April 2001 the Minister of Justice appointed a committee to propose measures to oppose prostitution and pornography. The committee submitted its report to the Minister in April 2002, with recommendations aimed at combatting these problems. The recommendations are being scrutinized with a view to changing legislation in order, among other things, to put a stop to prostitution (see also the discussion under Art. 6). The Minister will emphasise increasing international cooperation and collaboration especially concerning measures taken to stop trafficking of human beings. The Ministry participated in the Nordic-Baltic Campaign against trafficking in women, which started in May 2002 and ended formally with a conference in February 2003 (see further discussion under Art 6). In February 2003 the Minister submitted a bill to Parliament, in which trafficking in human beings is banned. The Parliament passed the new act in March 2003.

e. Witness protection and victims

Within the Ministry of Justice, efforts have been made for some years to improve witness protection and the status of victims. Part of this process is the protection of women who experience domestic violence or threats from spouses or former spouses. Icelandic legislation will be revised in order to improve it where necessary, especially in order to protect women in the cases mentioned above. At the same time, collaboration between the Nordic countries has been launched, aimed at improving witness protection and the issues mentioned above.

The Ministry of Social Affairs

a. Gender Equality focused evaluation

A working group has been established as a contact between three ministries, i.e. the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce and the Ministry of Finance. One of the tasks of the committee will be to investigate methods that can be used to assess compliance with gender equality requirements in draft legislation.

b. Instructions for shop stewards

A manual for shop stewards in the workplace will be published, followed by educational courses. The manual will contain, in accessible form, extensive information on factors that could possibly lead to discrimination between women and men in the workplace. The Centre for Gender Equality is preparing the manual for easy access on its website.

c. Women's Loan Insurance Fund

This fund is operated in cooperation between the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Industry and Commerc and the City of Reykjavik. The fund's overall objectives and its emphasis, in addition to how women have benefited fron this fund, are being examined on a regular basis. The major conclusion from the last report from the board of the fund i that it has been very successful. (See also the discussion under Art 4.)

d. Women and employment

Labour market measures consist largely of making remedies available to the unemployed. Special attention ha been given to employment among women, and special grants have been made to women for running businesses. The mai aims of this have been to broaden the range of employment opportunities, stimulate employment in the rural areas an give women greater access to capital, not least in cases where they are at a disadvantage when applying for assistance fron the traditional sources of credit.

The Directorate of Labour is to evaluate these measures and, in collaboration with the social partners, to develo measures designed specially to help unemployed women to find employment and/or strengthen their positions in othe ways.

e. Gender equality counsellor

A gender equality counsellor was engaged in the Northwest region due to the high rate of unemployment among women in this region in comparison with other parts of the country. This was an experimental project and after a assessment was conducted on the effect of this it was decided to extend the project until the end of 2005. It will also b extended to other regions of the country. Since October 1 2002 a gender equality counsellor has been situated in th Northeast region. On August 1 2003 the project in the Northwest was concluded, and since that date there has been a counsellor in the South region instead.

f. Measures taken to prevent sexual harassment

A study on sexual harassment, carried out and published in 1998, confirmed the existence of the problem on th labour market. As a response to those findings, Art. 17 of the Gender Equality Act, No. 96/2000, was drafted to defin and prohibit sexual harassment. The same article places the responsibility on employers and leaders of social activities t take special measures to prevent people from being subjected to sexual harassment in the workplace, schools etc. Directions on how to respond to sexual harassment are being prepared in collaboration with the Centre for Gende Equality and the Administration of Occupational Health and Safety.

g. Men taking responsibility

The project "Men Taking Responsibility" was operated as an experiment from April 1998 to the end of 2001. This was a treatment program for men who want to stop using violence in intimate relations. Funding has mainly provided by the Icelandic Red Cross, the Ministry of Health and Social Security and the Ministry of Social Affairs. The Icelandic Red Cross was in charge of the daily management of the programme. Two psychologists conducted the treatment, which was mainly group-based. The programme has been evaluated and found to be relatively successful. In the revised Action Programme, the Ministry of Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Social Security and the Icelandic Red Cross, is entrusted with following up the previous programme and developing it in such a way as to be of benefit to more people.

The Ministry of Finance

a. Survey of the effect of a new wage system on gender-based wage differential

Most of the collective agreements signed by the Minister of Finance, on behalf of the State Treasury, and the unions within the Federation of State and Municipal Employees and the Federation of University Graduates, which were to be valid until 2000, were accompanied by a declaration reiterating the Government's policy of eradicating wage differentials between men and women that could not be explained otherwise than as being gender-based, and it was pointed out that a new wage system offered an opportunity for doing this. On the basis of this agreement, the Ministry of Finance and the City of Reykjavík have jointly approached the University of Iceland's Social Science Institute and asked it to investigate wage differentials that can only be explained as being gender-related.

b. Awareness-raising measures aimed at heads of bodies administered by the Ministry

It is intended to present awareness-raising material or lectures on equality issues at meetings between the Ministry of Finance and the heads of bodies under its administration. Furthermore, it is planned to increase the proportion of women on committees and councils under the Ministry during the period of the programme. Emphasis is also to be placed on observing gender equality in all respects in the Ministry's personnel policy.

Statistics Iceland

a. All data to be broken down by gender

In collaboration with the Centre for Gender Equality, Statistics Iceland will monitor progress made in the direction of having all official statistics analyzed by gender, and will issue regular reminders of this policy as specified in law.

b. Statistical handbook on gender status

It is planned to issue a statistical handbook containing a overview of gender status during the period of the action programme.

The Ministry of Health and Social Security

a. Project Committee on women's health issues

The Minister of Health and Social Security has appointed a project committee on women's health issues. The committee will prioritise tasks and projects, create action plans and put these plans into effect. The purpose of the project committee is also to make sure that health care institutions and service providers will focus on and emphasise the different needs and circumstances of men and women.

b. Instruction programs for prospective fathers

Special instruction programs for prospective fathers have been developed. These programs will serve as a part of the preparation that will be offered to prospective parents. Simultaneously a campaign will be launched in order to make personnel in health care institutions more aware of the importance of fathers' being able to play a more active role during pregnancy and birth and in caring for their children.

c. Calculation of disability benefit payments with a view to gender equality

It is planned to investigate, using methods of gender mainstreaming, whether traditional evaluations of work done by women and men lie behind the calculation of disability benefit payments.

d. Special preventive campaigns against drug and tobacco consumption

In campaigns designed to reduce the consumption of drugs and tobacco, it will be taken into account that consumption by women and girls may be different from that by men and boys. It is planned to make an experiment in which publicity and information will be directed specifically to young girls.

e. Men's risk behaviour

Men and boys include the majority of those who are injured, commit suicide and become substance abusers. This is a major health problem and it is therefore important to seek the causes of this problem. The Ministry will investigate especially the images of masculinity in the society that play a vital role in such behaviour and result in injuries, suicides and poisoning.

The Ministry of Industry and Commerce

a. Support from the New Business Development Fund for women's business ventures

The role of the New Business Development Fund is to encourage the growth and development of Icelandic business. It is designed partly to act as a powerful backer for small and medium-size businesses. Women are becoming increasingly involved in small and medium-size businesses, and the Ministry of Industry and Commerce regards it as important to support this trend. The Ministry will urge the board of the fund to ensure that the fund supports women's involvement in business in the course of its ordinary operations and that it creates new opportunities for them.

The Ministry of Agriculture

a. Social and economic rights of women in the agricultural sector

Certain provisions regarding ownership in the agricultural and farming sectors, and the attendant rights and obligations, will be examined. Proposals for amendments will be made, where necessary, in order to equalise the standing of women and men.

b. Women's employment opportunities in rural areas

The Ministry of Agriculture will take measures to give full consideration to the position of women farmers in the rural areas in all the special projects carried out under the current action programme which have a bearing on the position of women on the labour market and the opportunities they have to run their own business ventures and engage in continuing education.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

a. Work aimed at equality and against traditional division of roles

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture will continue to make it a priority to have the schools concertedly to ensure equal rights for boys and girls, to educate pupils about the standing of the genders and to work against having them stagnate in the traditional division of roles between the sexes. It is important that the educational system should not contribute towards the wage-differential between the sexes, e.g. by encouraging women to follow particular courses of study and men to follow others.

b. Teaching of equality issues in the schools

A programme is to be drawn up for the enhancement of teaching of equality issues in the schools and awareness-raising among teachers and school principals. Special emphasis will be placed on the strengths of both genders and on their obligations and rights, and also on material for families and information on academic and vocational instruction in both primary and secondary schools. In this connection, emphasis will be placed on the training and instruction of teachers and school principals.

c. Additional emphasis on sports training for girls

Girls have a high drop-out rate from sports. A committee that was appointed to examine policy on girls' and women's sporting activities has submitted detailed findings and proposals on methods of increasing women's and girl's participation in sports. The Ministry will prepare a programme of action on the basis of these proposals.

d. Computers and information technology

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture will continue to make it a priority to have both sexes gain computer and information technology skills and to ensure that at all levels of the school system, material will appeal equally to boys and girls.

The Ministry of Communication and Transport

a. Women as employers in the tourist industry

It is planned to evaluate the contribution made by women to the tourist industry in view of the fact that this industry is becoming constantly more important both for the level of employment in Iceland and the generation of income in general. The aim of the survey will be to examine the involvement of women and men in this growing industry so as to make it possible to assess whether, and if so, how, changes or special support measures are of assistance to women as well as men.

The Ministry of Fisheries

a. Women and business operations in the fisheries sector

A survey will be made of whether, and if so, then in what areas, women active in the fisheries sector have established positions for themselves as independent employers. Particular attention will be given to the access that women have to assistance in the form of grants and loans. If the survey reveals particular opportunities for women in this area, then special support will be made available. In the same way, special measures will be taken if the survey reveals the existence of gender-based discrimination.

b. The special position of seamen and their families

A survey will be made of the effects of seamen's long absences and isolation from their families; this will be grounded on a preliminary study that has already been carried out.

It is planned that a report on the results of the programme of action for 2002-03 and of the status of individual projects under the programme will be submitted to the Althingi in spring 2004, when a new programme covering the period 2004-07 will be submitted.

Collaboration with other countries to promote gender equality

As has been mentioned in earlier reports, Iceland participates in the Nordic Council of Ministers' gender equality co-operation scheme. This scheme is based on a Nordic plan, the present one applying to the period 2001-2005. The general objectives of the scheme are as follows:

- Nordic visions and the position of the Nordic community must be promoted in European and international co-operation.
- Co-operation must promote and enhance each Nordic country's national effort on behalf of gender equality.
- The gender equality perspective must be incorporated into all areas of society, including all activities of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

A Nordic Gender Equality conference was held in Reykjavik in March 1999. The objective of this conference was to discuss gender equality in counselling provided by the employment services in the Nordic countries. The Nordic Council of Ministers granted finance for the conference, which was held under the auspices of the Directorate of Labour. Participants were to analyse how gender-based considerations influenced counselling, employment offers and solutions, and to identify how gender could be made as neutral as possible an element in counselling and the providing of employment, and also how dialogue could be established with the labour market in order to break down the gender-divided labour market and draw the attention of the employment sector to the advantages of mixed-gender workplaces. Participants were also concerned with the question of whether these goals might be best achieved by gender mainstreaming or by other methods. The results and conclusions from the conference have been used by the Directorate of Labour in order to promote and implement an approach based on gender mainstreaming.

The Minister of Finance and the Centre for Gender Equality are working together on a Nordic Council of Ministers' project on gender and equality perspectives in Nordic economic policy in co-operation with the other Nordic countries. New methods and instruments will be developed for gender budgeting.

The municipalities of Reykjavik and Akureyri took part in a Nordic Mainstreaming project that was concluded in 2000. In both cases the focus was on mainstreaming in the youth sports and recreation sector. The primary conclusions are that employees and organisational managers at all levels, and also the girls and boys themselves, are more aware and concerned about gender equality than before (see also the discussion under Art. 12). The project has now been "copied" by other municipalities and in one case it has been expanded to include recreation and social services for the elderly.

The Icelandic Government has also taken an active part in EU collaboration under the European Economic Area Agreement and in international collaboration organized by the United Nations. Iceland was elected to the UN Women's Committee in spring 2003, and will take its seat there in March 2004 for a four-year period.

Article 4

The new Gender Equality Act prohibits all types of discrimination on the basis of gender, either direct or indirect. However, special temporary measures taken to improve the status of women or men, for the purpose of ensuring equality and the equal status of women and men, are not to be considered violations of the Act. Furthermore, the Act prohibits employers to advertise, or publish an advertisement for, a vacant position indicating that a woman or a man is preferred over the other as an employee. This provision shall not apply if the aim of the advertiser is to promote a more equal distribution of women and men within an occupational sector, in which case this is to be stated in the advertisement. The same rule shall apply if there are legitimate reasons for advertising either for a woman or a man.

Special measures aimed at accelerating gender equality

Among special measures aimed at accelerating gender equality, the following can be mentioned:

- *The Auður Project (2000-2002)* was designed to utilise better the resources residing in women by increasing their participation in enterprise creation, so promoting increased economic growth in Iceland. In the short period covered by the project, 217 new jobs were created under it. More than 1,000 women and young girls took an active part in the project.
- *Association for women in business*: References are made to answers under Article 3
- *Women's Loan Guarantee Fund:* One of the projects supported since 1998 has been a special loan guarantee fund for women, originally set up for a trial period of three years. It is intended to support women in new ventures and participation in the business world by granting guarantees for loans; these guarantees may be used as collateral under the rules of the fund. An examination of the fund's operations and results was made at the end of the trial period in 2000, and it was decided to continue its operations. The main findings of the examination were as follows:

    1. The fund had approved guarantees for 28 projects during the three years of its operations. In most cases these were innovative ventures that were important contributions to the business and employment sectors in the rural areas. Many of these new ventures were in the clothing and textile industries; others were in other types of industry and in commerce and services.

    2. The existence of the fund was of vital importance for the projects that it supported by granting guarantees. Without it, very few of them would have been started. In most cases, the loans granted guarantee amount to half or more of the total financing of the projects.

    3. The extent of the loan guarantee fund's activities is not great in terms of the overall participation by women in running businesses: there are about 5,000 companies either owned or directed by women in Iceland today. Under the rules of the fund, projects must be controlled by women, they

must involve innovation and may not be in competition with comparable enterprises in the same area.

4. The fund's financial standing is sound. About ISK 30 million has been put into the fund; the majority of the loans it has guaranteed are being repaid on time, and so far the fund's guarantees have not been called upon to pay off any loan. Enterprises that have received guarantees from the fund are generally small, with an average of 2.4 employees in 2 full-time-equivalent positions in each workplace; in about 40% of cases there was only 1 employee. The fund has put up guarantees for loans to enterprises that provide employment for more than 50 employees in just over 40 full-time-equivalent positions. In addition, 15-20 people are employed either for specific projects or on a part-time basis, working at home, at three of these enterprises. In interviews, 60% of the loan recipients said the fund was a good initiative, but that it should be available to more women; a further 10% doubted that their projects could have been put into practice without the guarantees provided by the fund.

- *Special grants to women's business activities:* References are made to answers under Article 11, subparagraphs a-c.
- *Impra, Service Centre for Entrepreneurs and SME's* particularly emphasizes its services for women intending to go into business by providing assistance in start-up companies. Women already in business can also receive assistance with the development of future possibilities for their companies.

Article 5

The Government's aim is that all individuals are to have equal possibilities to benefit from their own efforts and develop their abilities, independent of their gender. In order to achieve this goal, measures have been taken to enable both women and men to integrate their family life and working careers, so promoting equality of influence between women and men in decision-making and policy-making in society.

The Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave Act, No. 95/2000.

A new Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave Act, No. 95/2000 entered into force in 2000. This constitutes a fundamental reform of the older system. The main aim of the Act is to create conditions in which men and women are able to participate equally in paid employment and other work outside the home, and to guarantee children time with both parents. The Act is intended to make it easier for parents working outside the home (both mothers and fathers) to strike a balance between the demands of their careers and those of their families. Another aim is to promote a sharing of parental responsibilities and gender equality on the labour market (see also the discussion under Art. 11).

A new department in the Maternity Ward of the National University Hospital of Iceland was opened in autumn 2000. Named "The Nest", it contains separate rooms for each birth, with adequate facilities for both parents. Guidance and pre-natal preparation has been aimed at enabling fathers be present at the birth of their children, assuming that the delivery proceeds normally. One of the roles of the present programme of action is to establish special preparatory material to offer to prospective fathers. It is also planned to stage a special campaign to ensure that health service employees are aware of the importance of fathers being involved as active participants during pre-natal care and the birth and post-natal care of their children.

The Gender Equality Act, No. 96/2000

The Gender Equality Act, No. 96/2000, contains a special provision on the reconciliation of family and occupational obligations and a provision stating that institutions and enterprises with more than 25 employees are to set themselves equality programmes or to make special provisions regarding gender equality in their employment policies; this is intended to meet the rising demand by women to be accepted as fully valid members of the workforce, and of men to play a greater role in their families. The measures taken by employers are to include the aims of increasing flexibility in working hours in order to take account of their employees' needs regarding their occupational and family obligations, including measures to facilitate their return to work following maternity/paternity or parental leave.

One major project on the reconciliation of family life and work (Striking the Balance), which was a collaborative project by the municipal authorities of the City of Reykjavik, Gallup Iceland, and 35 companies in the private and public sectors in Reykjavik, was carried out in 2000–2001. This project has resulted in more discussion in the society on the importance of flexible working time to make it possible for employees, both women and men, to strike a balance between the family life and work. This project has been proceeded and has its own webside (www.hgj.is).

The Government of Iceland's last Report mentioned a government programme on flexible working hours for government ministry staff. This project produced very good results, and it was decided to continue to strive after flexibility when planning employees' working time.

The Prohibition on Redundancies due to Family Responsibilities Act, No. 27/2000

The Prohibition on Redundancies due to Family Responsibilities Act, No. 27/2000, entered into force in spring 2000. Under the Act, a person may not be made redundant solely because of the family responsibilities he/she bears.

Three principal conditions must be met to demonstrate the existence of family responsibilities on the part of an employee. Firstly, the responsibilities must be towards the employee's own children, spouse or close relatives. Secondly, the persons concerned must live in the employee's own home, and thirdly, the person or persons involved must need the care or guardianship of the employee himself in connection with, e.g., illness, disability or comparable circumstances. All three conditions must be met in order for the employee to be regarded as bearing

responsibility for the relevant individuals in the sense of the Act. The Act is substantially based on the ILO's Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, No. 156.

Special measures

Special measures have been taken to support women in positions of leadership in the labour market. In April 2000, a two-year agreement was signed by various parties in Iceland with the aim of strengthening the role of women in the Icelandic labour market, with special emphasis on leadership roles. This pilot program has been undertaken to increase women's participation in leadership in economic life and to encourage women in choosing male-dominated fields of studies in higher education, especially in information and communication technology and engineering (See further discussion under Art. 10, subparagraph c).

Education programme

Among the main elements or pillars of the new school policy which entered into force in 2000 is the concept of "life skills". The subject "life skills" is described as an independent subject with a minimum of one lesson per week from grade 4 to 10 in the new curriculum. Life skills activities are also to be included in all other subjects. These skills prepare pupils for their life and work in a democratic society by deepening their understanding of society as well as its cultural roots, modes of employment and production, culture, nature, family responsibility, financial duties, personal duties and rights. Confidence, determination and the faculty for making independent decisions and the capacity to react quickly and sensibly to new circumstances facilitate coping with the present and the future. Critical thinking, healthy judgement and assessment of values, together with tolerance, lay the foundation for success. Schools have a duty to strengthen pupils' ambition and positive self-image. In this way they will become stronger individuals. They must be able to express their opinions, be unafraid of change, be able to take risks and be responsible for their actions. Pupils' capacity to appreciate culture and the arts must be cultivated in order for them to contribute in this area.

Article 6

Trafficking in human beings

The Icelandic Government has put emphasis on taking preventive measures against trafficking and prostitution; in this regard Iceland has ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and has signed the International Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol on the Prevention, Suppression and Punishment of Trafficking in Persons and is preparing its ratification. In March 2003, Parliament passed a new act amending the Penal Code under which trafficking in persons will be punishable by up to eight years in prison. The relevant provision reads as follows:

"Trafficking in persons shall be punishable by up to eight years' imprisonment if any of the following a committed in the purpose of exploiting a person sexually, for forced labour, or for the removal of organs:

1. Recruiting, transporting, housing, or receiving any person who is or has been subjected to unla duress as punishable under Article 225, deprivation of liberty as punishable under Article 226, t as punishable under Article 233, or unlawful deception by evoking, strengthening or making use misconception or by any other inappropriate means;
2. Recruiting, transporting, housing or receiving a person under the age of 18 years, or provi payment or other advantage in order to obtain approval from a person in charge of a child.

The same penalty shall also be imposed on a person who receives payment or other advantag provided for in subparagraph 2 of the first paragraph."

Iceland has experienced being a transit country for trafficking in human beings from Europe to the U States. The first judgement for trafficking in human beings was delivered in June 2003, in Case No. 735/ before the Reykjanes District Court. In this case, a man was sentenced for having, for profit, operat systematic activity assisting foreign nationals in entering Iceland or another country. He had assisted four Chi people (two men and two women) in travelling from China to the USA. It was not stated in the case expectations awaited these people on arrival in the USA.

A number of foreign women come each year to Iceland to work as strip-tease dancers in clubs. Wh study commissioned by the Minister of Justice confirmed a link between strip clubs operated in Reykjavik prostitution, it was realised that the situation was potentially serious. It was recognized that some of the for women working as strip-tease dancers might be forced into prostitution. This information is important for fu work in the fight against trafficking in women in Iceland. Every means must be used to combat this trend information campaigns aimed at informing people and increasing knowledge and awareness among the public of vital importance. The Icelandic police force has been working together in this area with its counterparts in Nordic and Baltic countries.

One of the Government's actions to combat trafficking in human beings was to amend the Foreign Nation Right to Work Act, No. 133/1994 so as to make it necessary to apply for work permits for women coming non-EEA countries who intend to work as strip-tease dancers in clubs. Before 2000 these dancers were define artists and did not need special work permits if they stayed in Iceland shorter than four weeks. In 2000-2002, work permits were issued to strip-tease dancers and 70 had their permits extended. The women came from countries. Most were from Hungary (93), Estonia (81), the Czech Republic (71) and Latvia (40). Other coun of origin included Brazil (16), Slovakia (16), Canada (11) and Russia (11). It should be stated that Government has no information about the numbers of those who may have come from countries within European Economic Area (EEA), since they are not required to apply for special work permits in order to wo Iceland.

The Icelandic Government took part in the Nordic-Baltic Campaign Against Trafficking in Women. On 16 January 2002, the Nordic Council of Ministers' Executive Committee on Gender Equality adopted a resolution setting out the objectives of the Campaign. The Committee decided that the Campaign should aim to "increase knowledge and awareness among the public, and to initiate discussion about the problems surrounding the issue of trafficking in women."

The Campaign was planned and implemented by a Nordic-Baltic Working Group Against Trafficking in Women. The working group decided to use the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its definition of trafficking as a point of reference for the Campaign and for the national campaigns.

The main purpose of the campaign was to bring the issue of trafficking in women to the attention of the public, especially regarding the buyers and potential buyers of sexual services. The aim was also to inform the women who apply to come to Iceland on work permits as "dancers" of their legal rights. The campaign ended with a conference featuring speakers from the US and Swedish governments, among others. Both the Minister of Social Affairs and the Minister of Justice addressed the conference, these two ministries having been in charge of holding the campaign. A special 12-page supplement devoted to the campaign was published and distributed with one of the daily newspapers in Iceland.

The government and some municipal authorities have taken serious measures to prevent illegal activities which they feel could encourage trafficking. A victory was won in this regard in February 2003 when, in Case No. 542/2002, the Supreme Court of Iceland upheld a decision by the municipal authorities in the capital to ban private "lap dances" in strip clubs. Though strip-tease dancing was permitted by law, the Supreme Court nevertheless considered it permissible to set general limits to the activity in the interests of decency and public order. The Court considered that Article 3 of the Police By-Laws Act, No. 36/1988, constituted an unequivocal authorization for setting these rules in the police bye-laws, and that it was the role of the police to ensure that they were observed and that no criminal activity took place in restaurants. It noted that private strip-tease dancing displays took place in enclosed areas in the restaurants, and that monitoring could not be carried out under such circumstances. The Court ruled that the proposed amendment to the police bye-laws did not constitute a ban on strip-tease dancing, but merely stipulated that the dancers were prohibited from shutting themselves away with customers or moving among the audience while their show was in progress. The Court noted that this general rule was set in accordance with the Act No. 36/1988, and that it enabled the authorities to monitor displays of strip-tease dancing and ensure that public order and decency were observed and that no criminal activity took place in night-clubs. Thus, the Court concluded, the plaintiff's licence to operate a night-club could not constitute an authorization to him to have "lap-dances" take place in enclosed spaces in the restaurants or to allow the dancers to move about among the audience. In the view of the Court, these aspects of the plaintiff's operations could therefore not be considered as professional activities that qualified for protection under Article 75 of the Constitution, and consequently, the Icelandic Government and the City of Reykjavík were acquitted of the night-

club's demands. Other local authorities followed the example set by the City of Reykjavík and banned "l dances" in night-clubs within their jurisdictions.

The Government of Iceland intends to continue its campaign against trafficking in people and also participation in international measures against this serious problem.

Prostitution

The possibility of the existence of prostitution in the capital area was examined in the above-mentio study made for the Minister of Justice. It revealed the existence of prostitution and its social environment. confirmed the fact that prostitution existed in Iceland in the form of "survival sex," among young drug addi and in connection with striptease clubs, as mentioned above.

Amendments to the Penal Code were made in February 2002 making the purchase of sexual services fr a child under the age of 18 illegal.

The Minister of Justice appointed a committee to propose measures to address the issues of pornograp prostitution, trafficking and possible amendments to the Penal Code. The committee completed its work in June 2002, its recommendations are under examination by the Ministry of Justice.

Violence against women

Corresponding to Norway's Sixth and Sweden's Fifth Reports to the Committee on the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, a decision was made to report on violence agai women under Article 6 rather than Article 12 as was done in Iceland's last report.

As mentioned in Iceland's combined Third and Fourth Periodic Report, the Minister of Justice appoin three committees following a debate and a study on the causes, extent and nature of violence against women. T first committee was to study whether it was necessary to amend Icelandic law in order to combat domes violence, to study how to strengthen the activities of NGOs engaged in preventive measures and measures agai domestic violence, to present proposals on preventive measures and measures to help the victims and perpetrat in domestic violence, and to study who should provide such auxiliary measures. The second committee w requested to study the handling of such matters in the judicial system and to present proposals to the Minister Justice on necessary reforms in this regard, including proposals on amendments of the Penal Code and the Co of Criminal Procedure, if needed. The third committee was to focus on the procedures in the investigation a procedures by the police. It was to present the Minister with proposals on necessary reforms, including propos on amendments of the Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure, if needed.

The main proposals of the three committees were that it was necessary to amend the law concern restraining orders, the protection of witnesses and the right of victims to have legal advisors. It w acknowledged that there should be legal remedies available which the police and the courts could use to prev

further violence and so protect the victim. Thus, the Icelandic Government has worked to establish effective remedies to respond in cases where violence occurs and to prevent it happening again.

Protection of victims

Section VII of the Code of Criminal Procedure, No. 19/1991, as amended by the Act No. 36/1999 and the Act No. 94/2000, and the Penal Code, No. 19/1940, contain special provisions on the protection of the victims of sexual and physical abuse.

First, the police are obliged to give victims guidance regarding their rights under the law, and also to inform the victim if an indictment is issued or if the investigation is discontinued.

Second, the victim has the right to have a legal advisor in the case of a sexual offence and if he or she so wishes. The police are obliged to appoint a legal advisor for the victim if the offence involves violence or a violation of personal freedom, if the victim has suffered substantial physical injury or disturbance to his or her mental health due to the offence and has, in the opinion of the police, a special need for such an advisor. The police are also obliged to appoint a legal advisor for the victim if the victim is under the age of 18 when the investigation begins. The role of the legal advisor is to defend the victim's interests in connection with the investigation and give him or her assistance, including the presentation of private law claims. The legal advisor is entitled to be present when statements are taken from the victim at all stages of the investigation of the case, and also has the right to attend all court hearings in the case, and to make statements, up to a certain point, in court. He or she also has the right of access to evidence in the case. The advisor's fees are paid by the State Treasury. The victim also has the right to engage a lawyer at his or her own expense to defend his or her interests in the case and act as a spokesperson. Such a spokesperson has the same rights and obligations, according to the circumstances, as a legal advisor.

Third, a judge may order an exception from the general rule of Icelandic law that court sessions are to be public and decide to hold a hearing *in camera*, either at his/her own discretion or at the request of the victim or the plaintiff. In such a case, the defendant does not have the right to be present in court or other venue of the trial while statements are taken from the victim or witnesses, if the judge considers that his or her presence may cause the person concerned particular embarrassment or difficulty or influence his or her testimony. Furthermore, what transpires in an *in camera* session may not be divulged without the permission of the judge, and the judge may forbid public reporting of other cases if statements of materials could cause the victim substantial suffering and discomfort. This may apply particularly in the case of sexual offences and cases involving domestic violence. Finally, in transcripts from the court records, anything that ought to be kept secret with regard to the interests of private individuals must be deleted.

Fourth, under the Act No. 94/2000, amending the Code of Criminal Procedure, courts may demand that the police impose what is known as a *restraining order*, involving a prohibition on a person going to a particular place or entering a specific area, or following, visiting or contacting the person protected by the order in any other

way. In order for this order to be imposed, there must be reason to believe that the person concerned would commit an offence or in some other way disturb the peace of the other person. This amendment was introduced with the aim of protecting the victim and preventing the occurrence of further violence or abuse. In general, only the police are able to request a restraining order by a court; this is generally done at the request of the person who needs protection, but the police may also take the initiative in applying for it. Under the Penal Code, violations of a restraining order are punishable by fines or imprisonment of up to one year, and by imprisonment of up to two years in the case of repeated or gross violations.

Fifth, provision is made for special protection of witnesses when charges are brought in connection with domestic violence or sexual offences and the victims are required to give testimony about the offence. In order to provide better protection for witnesses, a provision has been enacted in the Penal Code on the punishability of specific offences that can be traced to the fact that a witness has given testimony. The offences covered by the provision include bodily assault, coercion under Article 225 of the Penal Code and threats under Article 233 of the Penal Code, but the maximum sentences provided for are somewhat higher than normally applies to most of these offences. This provision applies not only when the offence is directed at the witness him- or herself, but also at his or her relations or others who have connections with the witness. The aim is to prevent pressure being applied to witnesses or their having to suffer retribution because of evidence they give.

Domestic violence

It has been decided to use the Emergency Reception facility established at the National University Hospital of Iceland for the victims of sexual assaults also for treatment of victims of domestic violence. The victims will be provided with specialized services by doctors and nurses, advice by psychologists or social workers and legal assistance aimed at assisting them to seek redress of their rights and to communicate with the police and judiciary.

The aim of the organization running the Women's Refuge (Kvennaathvarf) is to provide refuge facilities both for women and their children when the situation in the home makes it impossible for them to go on living there because of domestic violence, whether in the form of physical assaults or mental cruelty, practised by the husband or cohabiting partner or other persons in the home, and also for women victims of rape. It is also the organization's aim to provide counselling and information and to stimulate publicity and discussion of the problem of domestic violence. Table 1 shows a survey of admissions to the refuge for the period 1997-2002.

Table 1 Admissions to the Women's Refuge 1997–2002

Year	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997
Total admissions	435	503	347	298	400	395
Interviews	380	406	252	181	286	277
Stay periods	55	97	95	117	114	118
Number of children	41	74	61	80	98	113
Phone calls to emergency line	1614	1880	1635	1794	2500	2274

The number of admissions to the Women's Refuge dropped by 14% between 2001 and 2002. New admissions accounted for 44% of the total in 2002, which is 11% more than in 2001. It must be borne in mind that the total number of admissions to the refuge does not indicate the total number of women who were admitted to stay there: "admission" here is the term used to record entry, whether for the purpose of an interview or to stay. Thus, the same woman may come for more than one interview, each time she comes being recorded in the statistics as a separate entry. In 2002 the 435 recorded "admissions" applied to about individual 250 women.

Women who stay in the refuge receive support of various types to enable them to help themselves; individual counselling interviews account for the main part of such support. These are not treatment sessions, but support sessions. The various courses of action open to them are examined with them. When each woman leaves the refuge after a stay there, she is invited to return for an interview session. The average length of stays in the refuge has been growing shorter: in 1993 it was 18 days, in 1999 it was 11 days and it was eight days in 2002. Staff of the refuge report that more and more women choose to work out their tactics for resolving the problem of violence at home rather than to stay in the refuge, which is understandable in many ways since moving to the refuge and living in a strange house is a great upheaval for the women and their children. On the other hand, the refuge functions in many cases as a safe shelter where they can stay to gather their strength and decide on the course they want to take.

Training of the police

Dealing with cases of domestic violence and sexual violence is part of the general training of police officers at the Police Training College. It is probably fair to assume that only a small part of domestic violence offences are reported to the police and that this generally happens when the victim suffers injury. When the police go to the home, it is important that they make a proper investigation of the facts of the case and realise when an offence has been committed and whether the situation is a dangerous one. The police offer domestic violence victims assistance in seeking medical attention when this is called for. They also assist those who want to leave their homes and go to stay elsewhere, e.g. with friends or relatives or in the Women's Refuge.

Sexual offences

About 1,300 women came to Stígamót, the Centre for Sexual Abuse Victims, in the period 1997–2002; 440 did so in 2002, of which 255 were making their first visits to the centre. The increase compared with the previous year was about 30 individuals, or 13.3%; figures have increased since 1999, having diminished in the five years before that. No definite reasons can be given for this change. One explanation for the large numbers who contacted the centre in its early years may be that there was an accumulated need for support for the victims of sexual abuse, since few avenues were open to them before the centre was opened. There has been more public discussion of the problem of sexual abuse in recent years, which may possibly explain the rise in the numbers of

those coming to the centre for the first time: victims may now be finding it easier to talk about their experience and look for help. Table 2 shows admissions to the Stígamót for each of the years under discussion:

Table 2 Number of individuals turning to the Stígamót Centre 1997-2002

Year	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Number	215	178	213	214	225	255

There are many reasons why individuals turn to the Stígamót: rape, prostitution, incest and their consequences and also sexual harassment. One hundred and fifteen individuals contacted the centre in 2002 in connection with rape and its consequences and 147 in connection with incest and its consequences. Six contacted the organization in connection with prostitution and 18 in connection with sexual harassment.

It should be noted that 24 of those who contacted the Stígamót Centre in connection with rape also went to the Emergency Reception centre for rape victims. About 664 individuals, of which 96% was women, came to the Emergency Reception centre, in the period 1997–2002; 107 did so in 1997, 102 in 1998, 103 in 1999, 97 in 2000, 136 in 2001 and 119 in 2002.

In 1998 there were 39 cases of sexual offences against Art. 194–199 of the Penal Code under investigation in Iceland. Indictments were issued in 13 of these cases and the defendants were found guilty in seven cases. In 1999 there were 26 such cases; seven were prosecuted and sentences were passed in four of them; in 2000 there were 36 such cases; ten were prosecuted and sentences were passed in eight of them and in 2001 there were 32 cases with 11 indictments.

The past few years have seen public discussion of sentences imposed in Iceland in which the general drift has been that punishments are too light, not least in cases involving sexual offences, violence and drug offences. The policy in this area in Iceland has been that a certain framework of punishment is prescribed in the Penal Code, it being assumed that the courts have leeway in which to assess the conditions in each individual case and determine the punishments accordingly. Article 34 of the Penal Code states that imprisonment may be imposed either for life or for a specific period of not less than 30 days and not longer than 16 years. Thereafter, a separate framework is set for each category of crime. Mandatory minimum sentences are the exception in the Icelandic Penal Code: rape is one of the few crimes for which a minimum sentence is prescribed. Thus, the framework for sentences in rape cases runs from a minimum of one year to a maximum of 16 years' imprisonment. The average sentence for rape is 18 to 24 months imprisonment. According to a study of the Supreme Court cases involving rape in the years 1977 to 1996, the longest sentence was four years. Penalties for rape have increased somewhat in the past few years. It may be mentioned that in its judgement in Case No. 290/2001 of December 2001, the Supreme Court imposed a sentence of four and a half years for a violent rape. In general, people in Iceland trust the judicial system, in addition to which it is regarded as important that the Government and others respect their independence. It is also considered contrary to the general sense of justice and the rules on equality of treatment

under the law if punishments are suddenly increased all at once; this must happen gradually through an evolution of judicial practice.

By way of information, it should be stated that the Director of Public Prosecutions has always called for heavier penalties in rape cases than have actually been imposed by the Court. The Director of Public Prosecutions can appeal to the Supreme Court if he does not agree with the sentence imposed by the district courts.

Committee on violence against women

In January 2003 the Minister of Social Affairs appointed a committee on measures to combat violence against women. The Ministries of Justice, Social Affairs, Education, Culture and Science and Health and Social Security, and also the Union of Local Authorities, are represented on the committee. Its mandate is for four years and its task will be to coordinate actions taken by the authorities aimed at combating violence against women. The committee will make a survey of actions that have already been taken and give advice on further reforms in this field. The committee is also to organize campaigns and action programmes aimed at informing the public on violence against women. The committee will make it a priority to work closely with NGOs that are concerned with the issue.

Child victims of violence

In the event of suspicion that a sexual offence has been committed in violation of Section XXII of the Penal Code, No. 19/1940, and the victim is under the age of 18 when the investigation begins, then under Article 74 *a* of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the police are obliged to seek the assistance of a judge who will arrange to have a statement taken from the victim.

Special measures have been taken for the taking of statements from child victims of violence, who are often girls. A special Children's Centre, which was opened in 1998, is under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs. The main benefit of this is that the child need only go to one place for the statement, a medical examination, and subsequent treatment. In addition, special facilities have been prepared at the Reykjavík District Court for questioning children and taking statements from them. These facilities are more suitable than the regular courtroom for taking statements from children. The Children's Centre provides a wide range of services in connection with investigations and the taking of children's statements. They include counselling in the initial stages of cases such as sexual offences involving children, the taking of statements, medical examinations, etc. These services are provided by specialists in the relevant fields.

The statute of limitations (expiry of criminal liability) applying to sexual offences against children under the Penal Code was changed by the Act No. 63/1998. Under this amendment, the rule is that the period of limitation in the case of offences committed against a child only begins to be counted from the date on which the child reaches the age of 14. The rationale for this amendment is that otherwise there is a risk that it would no longer be possible to prosecute for the offence when the child reached the level of maturity required to realize that what was involved was a criminal offence. It must also be taken into consideration that children are

frequently connected or related to the perpetrators in special ways that may render it impossible for them, in practice, to bring a complaint. In determining the time reference used as a basis, an attempt was made to strike an acceptable balance between these considerations and the legal arguments on which the statute of limitations is based. These include the interests of the accused in not having charges brought against him or her long afterwards, and also that it frequently proves difficult to investigate crimes and obtain evidence if the charge is pressed very late.

The Act No. 40/2003 introduced an amendment to the Penal Code raising the framework for sentences in incest cases to 8 years in cases where the child is under the age of 18 and 12 years in cases where the child is younger than 16. This represents an increase of two years to the maximum sentences. The change was made to reflect the fact that it has become more and more clear in recent years how much damage children suffer from being abused sexually. The consequences may be very long-lasting and even permanent. The number of such cases brought before the courts has risen greatly in the past 10-15 years, though there is no single explanation for this. It may be that these offences are becoming more common, but it may also be that they were not reported in earlier periods. It is clear, however, that sexual offences involving children were hushed up for a long time but that the silence has now been broken. The view has been taken that the gravity of these offences should be assessed in terms of the consequences. In particular, it is pointed out that there is a great difference in age between the child victim and the perpetrator, who grossly violates the child's trust. It can be expected that sentences for these offences will become heavier following the passing of this legal amendment.

Part II

Article 7

Subparagraph a)

Women's representation in Parliament and local government

The Icelandic Third and Fourth Periodic Reports contain a comprehensive survey of the history of women and politics. In September 1998, the Minister of Social Affairs appointed a committee to increase women's participation in politics (see also the discussion under Article 3). The committee included representatives of all the political parties represented in the Althingi (parliament) in 1998, and also of the Women's Rights Association and the Gender Equality Council. The committee submitted its report early in 2003. The committee's first task was to work towards increasing the number of women elected to the Althingi in the 1999 elections. To begin its work, the committee had the market-research company Gallup conduct a survey based on three questions concerning women's participation in politics. This was put to a random sample taken from the National Register, and the response rate was 72.7%. The main point to emerge was that a majority (79.7%) thought that women's role in politics should be increased; only 3.5% were opposed to any such increase. Women were more in favour of this than men: 83% of women were in favour and 75% of men. In its work, the committee made it a priority to

consult the women's movements within the political parties, and held several meetings with them before the general election of 1999. It also mounted a special advertising campaign which attracted a great deal of attention. In this, the leaders of political parties co-operated in showing that the sexes are in many ways different and can not completely place themselves in each other's shoes. The aim of this campaign was to influence political leaders, draw attention to the way candidates were ranked in the electoral lists and stimulate discussion on this point in the media and among the general public and make people think about why it was necessary to involve women more in politics. The committee also sought to establish co-operation with the media and held meetings with the editors, news editors and programming directors of the main media in Iceland. After the elections 1999, 35% of Althingi members were women.

The committee continued its work after the elections of 1999, turning its attention to the next local government elections, which were held in spring 2002. Courses organized by the committee under the title *Support for women in politics – social affairs, speeches, articles and the media* were held all over the country. The committee also organized the publication of publicity material on women and the media, the aim of which was to urge the media to give women and men as far as possible equal opportunities to express themselves in the media. Members of the committee also took part in various conferences both in Iceland and abroad, and held public meetings in the electoral constituencies in Iceland.

The gender division of the candidates in the electoral lists for the local government elections in 2002 was 59% men and 41% women. (For comparison, the corresponding figures in the 1998 elections had been 62% men and 38% women.) In the 2002 elections, male candidates headed the lists in 80% of cases and female candidates in 20%; in 58% of cases the second name on the list was a man's and in 42% of cases the second name was a woman's.

The total share of women in municipal committees and boards increased slightly, compared to the situation after the elections of 1998, from 28% to 31%. Women are now in majority in local authorities in 10 municipalities. However, in nine local authorities there are no female representatives; for comparison, this was the case in 15 local authorities after the 1998 elections and in 32 local authorities after the 1994 elections. The proportion of women is highest in the Greater Reykjavík area, where women account for 44% of representatives and men for 56%.

Iceland has a long history of a high rate of voter participation in elections. In the 1999 elections the total voting rate was 84.1%; 84.4% of women and 83.8% of men.

In the last report it was stated that the Women's Alliance (*Kvennalistinn*) played a significant factor in increasing the number of women as candidates for election to Parliament. The Women's Alliance is no longer a distinct entity in Icelandic politics. With some major changes in the political national landscape in 1999, three of the former parties, the Social Democrats, the People's Alliance and the Women's Alliance, joined hands and two new parties were established, the Alliance and the Left Green Movement.

In its additional questions to the Government in connection with the Government's last report, the Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women put questions concerning the Women's

Alliance. It asked how many seats the Women's List won in the Parliamentary and/or municipal elections, what the Women's List's agenda was on women's issues and what initiatives it had brought to the Althingi. In its first municipal elections in 1982 the Women's Alliance won two seats in Akureyri and two in Reykjavik. In the following elections women from the Women's Alliance created coalitions with others in most parts of the country. In its first national elections the Women's Alliance gained three seats; four years later this number rose to six but in 1995 it had only three representatives elected to the Althingi. The Women's Alliance was always in opposition in the Parliament, but formed part of the majority in several municipal authorities.

The impact of the Women's Alliance on Icelandic politics and gender equality in Iceland is generally undisputed. It cleared the way for women inside the other parties, and also succeeded in having proposals passed by the Althingi. Among these was a proposal on a working committee to investigate rape in Iceland, which resulted in the establishment of emergency reception units for rape victims at the major hospitals in Reykjavik and Akureyri. There is no doubt that it is due to the existence of the party that more women participate in politics nowadays. As a result, women's issues moved into the mainstream of political debate, and all of the major political parties have at least one woman in a prominent leadership position.

Subparagraph b) and c)

Women's participation in public decision-making

Before the election of 2003 the Icelandic Government consisted of nine men and three women. In 2002 the proportion of women as permanent secretaries in the ministries was 15.4%. The proportion of women among directors of government bodies was 18.7% in the middle of 2002; this had risen from 14.4% in 2001. The proportion of women as ministerial directors is 26.3%.

The proportion of women on public committees and boards has risen steadily in the last decade. In 2000, the percentage of women in national public committees was 26.5%, ranging from 38.9% in the Ministry of Health and Social Security and 37% in the Ministry of Social Affairs to 10.1% in the Ministry of Agriculture. In 2002 the percentage of women on public committees and boards was 30%; in this respect the Ministry of Health is still in the lead with a women's proportion of 42% while the Ministries of Agriculture and Foreign Affairs only have 14%.

Table 3 Proportions of women and men on committees, boards and councils in 2002:

	men	women
Prime Minister's Office	62%	38%
Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs	65%	35%
Ministry of Social Affairs	60%	40%
Ministry of Finance	77%	23%
Statistics Iceland	67%	33%
Ministry of Health and Social Security	58%	42%
Ministry of Industry and Commerce	80%	20%
Ministry of Agriculture	86%	14%
Ministry of Education, Science and Culture	66%	34%
Ministry of Transport and Communications	90%	10%
Ministry of Fisheries	84%	16%
Ministry for the Environment	74%	26%
Ministry for Foreign Affairs	86%	14%
total:	70%	30%

No gender quota was set in the Government's Action Programme of 1998. Instead there was only a general statement that it was to be the aim of all the ministries to work towards equal representation on all public boards and committees. Under Article 20 of the Gender Equality Act, No 96/2000, efforts are to be made, wherever possible, to ensure approximately equal participation of women and men in committees, boards and councils under the auspices of the Government and local authorities. Attention is to be called to this fact whenever nominations are requested for the relevant committees, boards and councils. In the Government's Action Programme for 2002-2003 the ministries that have not already achieved a 40/60% ratio now have that aim.

After the local government elections of May 2002, 19% of municipalities' executive directors and 22% of heads of municipal councils are women.

The division of male and female court judges in January 2003 is that of the total of 38 district court judges, 29 are men and 9 are women. The total number of assistant judges is 12, consisting of 5 women and 7 men. The Supreme Court has 9 judges, 2 women and 7 men.

The Prime Minister appointed a committee to examine gender equality in public policy-making which began operation early in 2001. Its findings were that work on public policy-making was taking increasing account

of gender equality considerations, even though there were examples where these considerations had not been given sufficient attention. In the opinion of the committee, a knowledge of gender equality and "mainstreaming" methods is one of the factors that is lacking in many instances when public policy is formulated. The committee emphasized the importance of further education and awareness-raising concerning gender equality and mainstreaming for all civil servants who are involved in any way in policy formulation, both at the central and local government levels. Furthermore the committee considered that the ministries' gender equality coordinators played a valuable role in ensuring the observance of gender equality considerations in public policy-making. (See also the discussion under Article 3.)

Gender equality committees and gender equality officers are active in the largest local government areas. Special gender equality committees have also been established in some other cases; in the smaller local government areas, the social affairs committees have been entrusted with tasks in the field of gender equality.

Further reference is made to the proposals by the committee on women's economic power which are discussed under Article 3.

Article 8

Woman and men working in the ministries and government bodies have equal opportunities as regards representing the government in the international arena and participating in the work of international organizations. No data is available on the proportions between the sexes in Icelandic Government delegations, but due to the smallness of the executive in Iceland these delegations are generally small and frequently consist of only one or two members. Whether a particular member of the staff is involved in any particular co-operative functions abroad on behalf of the Icelandic Government depends on the area of specialization of the individual concerned.

Women in the diplomatic service and peacekeeping operations

Formal opportunities for women and men for promotion in the diplomatic service are supposed to be equal. However, the reason for the limited number of women in senior position in the Icelandic diplomatic service is that few women applied for positions in the service before 1980. It should also be taken into account that the personnel generally work for some time in the service before they move into senior positions.

Table 4 Women and Men in the Icelandic diplomatic service 2002

Position	women	men	total	% women	% men
Ambassadors	1	29	30	3.3	96.7
Minister Counsellors	4	19	23	17.4	82.6
Counsellors	8	14	22	36.4	63.6
First Secretaries	6	5	11	54.5	45.5
Attachés	14	0	14	100	0

In recent years a special effort has been made to increase women's participation in the diplomatic service. In 1998–1999 the Ministry for Foreign Affairs recruited women to 50% of all new positions requiring a university degree.

Since 1998 the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has sent 55 persons (34 men and 21 women) to work as peacekeepers on behalf of international institutions in the Balkan region. The majority of the group are police officers; these are mostly men, since there is a low proportion of women in the Icelandic police force. Nevertheless, when those posts were advertised, women were urged to apply. In 2001, 23 Icelandic peacekeepers were at work abroad, including seven women. In special development projects, such as in Kosovo and Africa, the Ministry has made special efforts to recruit women to their task force, and in the Kosovo case co-operation with UNIFEM was established.

Article 9

Amendments were made to the Icelandic Citizenship Act in 1998 under the Act No. 62/1998. The general principle in law had been that children acquired nationality through the mother at birth; this was amended so that men acquired equal rights, enabling them to have their children claim Icelandic citizenship through them in cases where the mother is non-Icelandic. Thus, a child now acquires Icelandic citizenship at birth if its father is an Icelandic citizen and its mother is foreign. Under the Children's Act, the same applies in cases where an unmarried woman who is a foreign national has a child in Iceland and the father is an Icelandic citizen. If an unmarried woman who is a foreign national has a child abroad by a man who is an Icelandic citizen, the father may apply to the Ministry of Justice for Icelandic citizenship for the child before it reaches the age of 18.

Part III

Article 10

Subparagraphs a) and b)

Education

In early March 1998, the Minister of Education, Science and Culture announced an educational initiative by launching an ambitious new school policy for the primary and lower secondary level, and also the upper secondary level. The new policy, put forth in conjunction with the renewal of educational standards and revision of the national curriculum, is certain to have a profound effect on the entire Icelandic educational system over the next few years. In order to follow up the new school policy, a new National Curriculum Guide for both the primary, lower secondary and upper secondary level was issued in 1999.

When the National Curriculum Guide was drawn up, a clear policy on gender equality was followed; this was also done by committees appointed by the Ministry and in the awarding of grants provided by the Ministry to various research projects in this area. The Ministry published a brochure, *Responsibility - Freedom - Equal rights – Choice*. This brochure contains guidelines and information concerning alternatives and options that are available after completion of the compulsory school. It also stresses freedom of choice, and the responsibility that follows and points out that in the "new school policy" every pupil will be able to find educational alternatives according to her or his ability.

To sum up, the essence of the new school policy is an attempt at creating an efficient but flexible educational system, a system that focuses on the needs of every pupil, increasing their range of choice, but simultaneously instilling academic discipline, good working skills, healthy competition and enhanced student responsibility in their studies.

The new policy addresses the varying needs of individuals through flexible schooling and varied teaching methods. The objective is not to teach all students the same thing, but rather to provide students with a solid foundation in the academic fields that they choose.

An equal right to education includes offering students suitable courses and teaching and providing them with an opportunity to apply themselves to subjects of their own choice. This does not necessarily involve the same solutions for all, but rather comparable and equally valid opportunities. Projects are to appeal to both boys and girls and regardless of various forms of disabilities, impairments or special needs. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture emphasises that schools are to prepare both boys and girls for participation in private and public life. One of the most important problems for schools and school authorities in this regard is to find ways to cater for students' dissimilar abilities and interests, i.e., to provide them with education appropriate for each and every one.

In 2000, about 54% of upper senior school pupils were girls and 46% were boys (see Table 5). Girls are in the majority in all courses of study in the upper secondary schools with the exception of two: in Crafts and Technical Trades they are very much in the minority (9%), and in Natural Science programmes the division is finely balanced, with 49% girls and 51% boys.

Table 5 Proportional division of students according to study categories

	Women	Men
Upper secondary level (2000)	**54**	**46**
General programmes	54	46
Languages	79	21
Fine and applied arts	79	21
Pedagogical and physical programmes	60	40
Social science programmes	64	36
Commerce, economics	51	49
Natural science programmes	49	51
Crafts and technical trades	9	91
Agriculture, food and service trades	61	39
Health-related programmes	95	5
Tertiary level (2000)	**62**	**38**
Languages, humanities	69	31
Fine and applied arts	63	37
Teacher-training, education science	86	14
Social science, jurisprudence	66	34
Economics, business administration	53	47
Natural sciences, mathematics	43	57
Engineering	24	76
Agriculture, food sciences, services	65	35
Medicine, nursing, etc.	78	22

Women continue to form the majority (62%) of students at university level. They account for the vast majority (86%) of those who pursue teacher-training and pedagogical courses. The proportion is reversed, however, in the case of Engineering, where men are in the majority (76%). A special co-operative programme involving various government institutions was launched in 2000 to encourage women to enter traditionally male-dominated sectors and vice versa; this is described below under subparagraph c.

Research in women's issues

Research in women's issues in Iceland can be traced back to the early 1970's, when the new women's movement became significantly influential in Icelandic society. The Icelandic Women's History Museum was founded by three

women in 1975, and since 1980 special courses in feminist studies have been offered at the University of Iceland, e.g. in women's literature and women's history. The first conference on research in women's issues was held in 1985, and in the wake of the conference an interest group on research in women's issues was founded. The interest group consisted of women both within and outside the university community.

A Centre for Women's Studies was established on the initiative of a group of feminist researchers at the University of Iceland in 1991. The Centre supports women's and gender studies at academic level, publishes feminist studies, orchestrates a lecture series and seminars during the academic year, provides information services and publishes a newsletter in Icelandic. The first program endorsed by the Centre was launched at the University of Iceland in autumn 1996. The program is interdisciplinary in scope, constituting a minor subject in BA degree or 30 credits out of 90 and covers two semesters or one academic year.

The establishment of an MA programme in women's studies at the University of Iceland is one of the priorities of the Centre in the coming years.

The University of Akureyri also has plans to offer courses in gender studies as from 2003.

Feminist studies in Iceland have been fruitfully applied to literary criticism, medieval studies, and studies of the women's movement and politics. Feminist emphasis is rapidly increasing in the social sciences and nursing, for example in studies of gender and education and the ethics of nursing. Research is undertaken both within the University of Iceland and by independent researchers supported by governmental grants.

The Centre for Women's Studies is preparing a database of Icelandic research in the field with abstracts in Icelandic and English. This women's database will provide an overview of this rapidly increasing body of literature.

Subparagraph c)

More than half of university graduates since 1980 have been women. They accounted for 80–90% of graduates for the teaching profession in the years 1995-1998. This has not yet been reflected in the proportion of women in leading positions in the school system. Nevertheless it can be said that there has been some increase in the number of women as principals and/or vice-principals in compulsory and upper secondary schools.

Table 6. Gender division among teachers

	Women	Men
Compulsory schools (2000)	**76**	**24**
Principals	39	61
Assistant principals	59	41
Teachers	78	22
Special education teachers	90	10
Upper secondary level (1999)	**43**	**57**
Principals	21	79
Assistant principals	11	89
Managers	42	58
Teachers	44	56
Tertiary level (1999)	**43**	**57**
Presidents	17	83
Professors	9	91
Assistant professors	26	74
Lecturers	50	50
Other teachers at tertiary level	52	48

To promote gender equality in schools, the National Centre for Educational Materials published a Handbook on Gender Equality in 2000 which is now in use nationwide in compulsory schools. The Ministry has published a booklet "Education – Culture – The premises of the future" that includes a declaration on ensuring gender equality, working towards changing stereotyped roles and strengthening pupils' self-esteem.

A five-member committee on Equal Rights at the University of Iceland was established in 1998. One of the main objectives of the committee is to promote within the university the recommendations of the Gender Equality Act, No 96/2000. The committee has published an Equal Rights Policy Programme for the University of Iceland for the period 2000–2004. The main objective of the programme is to promote gender equality in terms of working conditions and salary, to ensure equal participation of men and women in the management of the University of Iceland, and to ensure equal educational opportunities.

Other Universities in Iceland have as well adopted a Gender Equality Plan, or are in the process of developing plans.

Pilot programme to stimulate female leadership

A two-year agreement was signed by various parties in Iceland in April 2000 with the aim of increasing the role of women in the Icelandic labour market, with particular emphasis on leadership roles. It was signed by: the University of Iceland, the Centre for Gender Equality, the Prime Minister's office, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and some private companies. A special committee was appointed to supervise the programme.

This pilot programme has been undertaken to enhance female leadership in economic life and to encourage women to choose male-dominated fields of studies, especially IT and Engineering, in higher education. Male students were also encouraged to enter into or apply for female-dominated studies, such as nursing and social work. The programme started in September 2000 and has been very successful. In this way, the committee on Equal Rights at the University of Iceland is making efforts to eradicate stereotyped gender roles in education and diminish the gender pay gap in the knowledge society of the future.

In October 2002, as part of a gender equality campaign, the University of Iceland, the Centre for Gender Equality and the Commercial Workers' Union of Reykjavík, in collaboration with a private company, published an educational booklet entitled *The Key to Success on the Employment Market*. This is intended to give those who are about to complete third-level education and enter the employment market practical information about looking for jobs and taking their first steps in their working careers. The booklet was thought of as an encouragement to women to prepare themselves well for their future careers and to consider the earning potential when choosing postgraduate studies and work.

This is in conformity with the Gender Equality Act, which specifies that education on equality issues is to be provided at all levels of schooling, i.e. by emphasizing the equal preparation of women and men for active participation in society, family life and the labour market. Introductory material regarding educational and vocational training opportunities, and counselling within schools, is to introduce to both boys and girls those occupations that up to now have been considered as traditional male or female occupations. Special care is to be taken to ensure that educational materials and textbooks are designed so as not to discriminate against either sex.

Various other measures have been taken to increase gender equality within the educational system; it is hoped that they will bear fruit on the labour market and improve the position of women already active on the market.

- Special measures have been undertaken in primary and secondary schools in order to encourage more female students to enter into studies in natural sciences, engineering and technology on the higher education level. There is close cooperation with the faculties of engineering and natural sciences at the University of Iceland and with school managers, associations of academics in the above-mentioned disciplines, and companies.

- A project to make female students feel more welcome when they start their engineering and computer studies. An active co-operative scheme has been set up involving the relevant departments, senior female students and female engineering and computer graduates in order to assist female newcomers into these studies.

- A course in management, leadership and career planning has been organised in co-operation with Gallup Ltd for female students in their final year of study in all faculties of the University of Iceland.

- A course on the basics of starting a company and making business plans has been organised in co-operation with *Impra* (see also Art. 4), available to all female students in their final year of study in the faculties of Humanities and Social Science.

- A course in the management of art and cultural institutes for female students graduating from the faculties of Humanities and Social Science. The first course was held in June 2001 by the Nordic-Baltic Platform of Cultural Management Training (NBP) and ENCATC (European Network of Cultural Administration Centres). Later courses will be held with domestic teachers. This project is supported specially by an insurance company, *Sjóvá-Almennar Insurance*.

- A course on the philosophy of science and history of science, where special emphasis will be put on science in a wider cultural and societal context.

- Men and Nursing studies. Special measures have been taken to increase the gender balance in the field of Nursing studies. Measures have been taken to spread information on the department of Nursing at the University of Iceland to boys in their last school year at the primary and secondary school level. There is also a need for changing the image and the status of the subject field.

Conferences have also been held on this topic, and special research grants have been made. Some of these are mentioned below.

- Research grants have been offered in the field of gender equality, with special emphasis on gender equality in higher education.

- The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, in co-operation with the project, organised a special conference in the status of women in science in Iceland in 2002. The Ministry published a comprehensive report on this issue.

- Didactics in natural sciences and engineering. A seminar on didactics in natural sciences with emphasis on gender difference, i.e. the use of a variety of teaching methods in natural sciences will be encouraged in order to attract more female students into the field. Special measures that aim to increase the number of female teachers in natural sciences, engineering and technology on all school levels. As concerns the matter of didactics in natural sciences and potential actions to increase the number of female teacher-students that choose natural sciences as their main subject, the University will seek cooperation with the Iceland University of Education and foreign and domestic experts in the field.

Subparagraph d)

Reference is made to Iceland's previous reports.

Subparagraph e)

A great deal has been done to develop vocational training in various employment sectors in Iceland. The organisations of the social partners have greatly increased collaboration, often involving the school system as well. A good example of this is the *MENNT* scheme, which is a joint forum involving the business world and the schools. Its purpose is to serve those involved in planning educational policy for the business sector, these parties including government authorities, the schools and business enterprises. In addition, many occupational sectors have established special educational centres that have already proved their worth.

A new foundation for the functioning and policy of the Vocational Training Council was laid down in the year 2000; its new policy was unveiled under the name *Starfsmennt 2000*. The council's policy and working methods were radically revised in order to bring its workings into line with changes in the needs of the business sector, companies and institutions, and foreseeable developments. One of the objectives was to meet the new educational demands of the labour market. The vocational training programmes which the council offers include basic vocational training, continuing education and special remedies such as training in social skills. Regular review of the working methods of the council has been made a priority, the intention being to adapt them to changing conditions.

Grants totalling ISK 30 million were made from the Ministry of Social Affairs' Vocational Training Fund in 2000 and were divided between 34 recipients for a total of 55 projects. In addition, it was decided to put ISK 15 million into special development projects and ISK 5 million was devoted to research into, and promotion of, vocational training. The Vocational Training Council focussed on supporting, on the one hand, projects intended to stimulate vocational trainings in the rural areas, and on the other hand projects designed to promote new business ventures and streamlining measures. Emphasis was placed on collaboration between entities in different spheres, and it was stated particularly that the production of teaching materials would receive greater priority than the holding of courses. The recipient organisations included the educational councils in the construction industry, the Icelandic Technological Institute (for various projects), the Trade Unions' Educational Association and individual unions for projects designed for staff in caring for the elderly,

caring for children, the food industry, hospitals, cleaning services, etc. Never before have so many projects in the rural areas received support.

It was decided that three types of projects were to receive grants of the traditional type from the Vocational Training Fund in 2001: those connected with the use of the Internet in vocational training, those that contribute towards greater quality in vocational training and the vocational training of workers of foreign origin. Grants were made to 33 projects for a total of ISK 43.5 million.

In 2002 the emphasis was placed on projects connected with vocational training and information technology, greater quality in vocational training, in particular concerning the training of instructors, and vocational training for the disabled. Grants were made to 38 projects for a total of ISK 48.7 million in 2002.

Following the conclusion of the general collective negotiations in the year 2000, the organisations of the social partners set up three funds intended to cover support projects and measures to develop vocational training and encourage people to pursue it. Two of these funds are designated for unskilled workers and the third is for workers in the shop and office sector. The funds are intended to raise workers' competence and improve the competitive standing of enterprises.

Emphasis at the funds for unskilled workers include taking the initiative on developmental projects in the sphere of vocational training, promoting vocational training and encouraging people to pursue it and identifying the requirements of the business sector for vocational training of unskilled manual workers. Other priorities include seeking negotiations with the Government on the structure of adult education, introducing new ventures in the publication of educational material, reviewing educational material and making grants available for individuals and enterprises in connection with vocational education.

It was planned to spend a total of ISK 260 million on vocational educational projects for unskilled workers during the period covered by the agreements. A large part of this funding (ISK 200 million) comes from companies through their payment of an unemployment insurance levy, the unions contributing a total of ISK 60 million. Up to the change of year 2001-2002, grants approved from one of these funds came to ISK 26 million, and those from the other to ISK 28.5 million.

Both employees and enterprises can apply to the Shop and Office Workers' Vocational Training Fund, the aim of which is to raise competence and skills, and also to expand the range of educational opportunities and materials available to meet the needs of the business sector at any given time. The fund makes grants to assist employees to attend educational courses, pays for the holding of courses and the production of educational materials; it also assists enterprises by giving grants for vocational training and continuing education.

It is believed that the measures described above will be of benefit to women no less than to men. It should be mentioned that the majority of those employed in services on the Icelandic labour market are women, and the same applies to the numbers in unskilled positions.

Subparagraph f)

Early withdrawal by girls from the school system has not been seen as a problem in Iceland: they are in fact more likely to keep on in the upper levels of the school system than boys. Girls who have children early are, however, more likely than others to stop studying in school, and some local authorities have provided extra support for them in the form of grants administered by the social services.

Subparagraph g)

Gender Mainstreaming in sport and recreation sectors

Two municipalities in Iceland took part in a Nordic Gender Mainstreaming project that was concluded in 2000, in cooperation with the former Equal Status Bureau. The Icelandic municipalities were Reykjavik, the capital, and Akureyri, the largest municipality outside the capital area. This was a project in the sport and recreation sectors in the respective municipalities.

The findings of these projects have been used to implement direct measures in order to improve, especially adolescent girls' representation in sport and recreation activities in those municipalities. The main conclusions are that employees and organisational managers on all levels, as well as the girls and boys themselves, are more aware and concerned about gender equality than before. Some major and minor structural changes have dramatically changed both genders' interest in attending youth clubs and sports.

As a result of this project the Municipality of Akureyri for example demands, in contracts regarding grants to the municipality's sports clubs, that women and men shall be encouraged equally and shall have the same opportunities to practise sports within the sports clubs.

Girls' participation in sports

The Icelandic Sports Federation has adopted a plan in the trainers' training curriculum, in order to educate coaches and make attempts to increase girls' participation in sports. The federation has also developed plans and made special efforts in order to enable women to become board members in sports and youth clubs, nationwide.

Sexual harassment in sports

In 2002, the Icelandic Sports Federation published a brochure containing information from a recent survey about sexual harassment against women in sports. The brochure also contains guidelines on how to combat this phenomenon and is available in public places.

Subparagraph h)

Reference is made to educational programme under Art. 5 and subparagraphs a) and b) of Art. 10.

Article 11

Para. 1, subparagraphs a), b) and c)

Women's labour participation

As was stated in the Icelandic Government's last Report, participation by women in employment in Iceland has been at a very high level (just under 80%).

Table 7 shows the employment levels for women and men, by age-group, for the years 1998–2001.

Table 7 Participation in employment, by gender and age (%)

Year/sex	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	Total
1998/Men	71.3	93.2	97.6	97.5	93.3	55.5	87.1
1998/Women	75.3	78.8	86.7	91.8	83.0	28.3	77.4
1999/Men	73.3	94.6	98.9	97.8	94.1	50.1	87.7
1999/Women	78.1	83.1	87.7	90.6	80.3	27.3	78.6
2000/Men	77.4	93.6	98.0	96.0	94.7	48.3	87.9
2000/Women	81.1	85.4	87.7	91.8	76.8	22.6	79.0
2001/Men	77.6	94.6	98.1	96.2	92.8	49.7	88.2
2001/Women	77.6	84.6	88.5	91.4	81.7	23.4	78.9

Source: Statistics Iceland

The employment rate for women aged 16-74 in Iceland in 2002 was 78.4%. The corresponding figure for men was 87.3%. Participation levels were generally high in the country at this time and unemployment rates correspondingly low.

Unemployment among women was 3.3% in 1998, 2.6% in 1999, 2.9% in 2000 and 3% in 2002; the unemployment rate among men in the same years was 2.3%, 1.5%, 1.9% and 3.4% In recent years, special attention has been given to employment among women, and special grants have been made to women for running businesses. The main aims of this have been to broaden the range of employment opportunities, stimulate employment in the rural areas and give women greater access to capital, not least in cases where they are at a disadvantage when applying for assistance from the traditional sources of credit.

The Icelandic labour market still appears to be very much gender-divided both as regards the proportion of women in the various occupations and also as regards the rates for each sex in managerial positions. According to a labour market survey made by Statistics Iceland in 1999, 43% of third-level graduates in the labour force were women and 57% were men. In 2002 the ratio of women had risen to 47.1%. Table 8 shows the ratios of each sex in various occupations during the period 1998-2001.

Table 8 Occupations and genders 1998-2001 (%)

	1998	1999	2000	2001
Unskilled *				
Men	45.5	45.6	47.6	47.5
Women	54.5	54.4	52.4	52.5
Specialised college graduates				
Men	73.7	73.8	70.9	73.0
Women	26.3	26.2	29.1	27.0
University graduates				
Men	55.3	56.5	56.5	54.3
Women	44.7	43.5	43.5	45.7
Service and store workers				
Men	43.6	42.9	42.6	42.5
Women	56,4	57.1	57.4	57.5
Farmers and fishermen				
Men	74.2	76.6	75.4	79.0
Women	25.8	23.4	24.6	21.0
Specialised industrial workers				
Men	72.1	76.3	77.8	78.0
Women	27.9	23.7	22.2	22.0

* With compulsory schooling and lower secondary school certificate

Source: Statistics Iceland

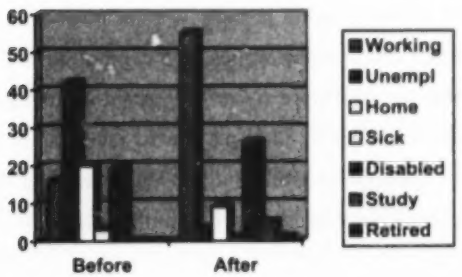
As can be seen from Table 8, women outnumber men within various service occupations, while men continue in the majority in agriculture, fishing and manufacturing industry.

Women's Education Centres

The Women's Education Centre in Akureyri has taken part in three international projects (one Nordic/Baltic and two European) for training of trainers in Women's Education Centres. As a result, two more similar centres were established in rural Iceland (West and North West) and two other rural educational centres (in North East and East Iceland) adopted the ideology for other courses, for both women and men. All women's centres have shown similar results. The Lifelong Learning Centre in Western Iceland is now leading a European Grundtvig project on Women's Education Centres, starting with a European Seminar in Iceland in June 2003.

The Women's Education Centre in Akureyri has published an evaluation of its work from 1994-2000. The evaluation included 203 women born in the years 1925 to 1984. Before entering the programme, 42% of the women were registered unemployed, 20% without employment but not registered, 19% on disability benefits, 3% registered sick and 16% had some part-time work.

1–5 years after the completion of the programme, 55% were employed, 5% were continuing their studies at other educational institutions (such as universities), 9% unregistered unemployed, 3% registered unemployed, 1% retired, 1% registered sick and 26% were receiving disability benefits.



83% claimed that their self-esteem had grown considerably or dramatically, 75% claimed that their ability in communication had increased significantly and 49% felt they were in a stronger position on the labour market. 88% claimed that the programme had increased their overall life-competence.

The Women's Education Centre in North West Iceland has been a part of the programmes for rural women (see article 14). Their results are very similar to those in Akureyri described above. They also reasoned that the government's budget to pay the costs of the Women's Education Centre was paid back in full, in saved unemployment payments in less than a year.

The Access Course

References are made to Iceland's Third and Fourth Periodic Report.

The Access Course has not been formally evaluated, but the general impression is that it is a great success. Participants in the first year were two groups of 24 women each, and in 2000 two groups of 23 women each started the course. One of the indirect outcomes of the project is the Businesswomen's Association.

Job evaluation

The Ministry of Social Affairs, in cooperation with a working group, developed a pilot project concerning job evaluation. The main objective of this project was to classify jobs in a gender-neutral mode, in order to reduce the pay gap between women and men. One person was hired to chair the project and the former Equal Status Bureau and the City of

Reykjavik contributed personnel. The project was carried out in the public sector (i.e. both the governmental municipal sectors).

The working group was dissolved before its working period was over. The director's report was published in spr 1998 but the working group as a whole was not behind it. The report is divided into three sections. The first part give detailed account of the experimental project, its preparation and execution and the ranking of jobs according to evaluation. The second part, which accompanies this Report as Appendix I, presents the principal findings and dra conclusions from the experimental project. The third part contains directions on evaluating jobs and the princi requirements that a job evaluation system must meet (see Appendix II).

The aim of the project was to investigate whether job evaluation was a useful tool for reducing wa differentials between the sexes. The director's conclusion is that job evaluation is based on far more scienti methods than other measures that have generally been adopted when determining wages. Job evaluation make possible to compare the content and value of dissimilar jobs and can therefore be an important instrument applying the provisions of the Gender Equality Act, which states that women and men are to receive the sa wages for work which is comparable and of equal value. However, the prerequisite for job evaluation being of in eradicating gender-related wage differentials is that gender equality be observed as the guiding principle in stages of its application.

As a result of the experimental project mentioned above, the City of Reykjavik and the Union of Local Authori in Iceland have been developing a gender-neutral job-evaluation instrument, based on a British model. Contracts h been made with over 50 trade unions on all levels on using the instrument. The job-evaluation instrument will be effect from year 2003.

Part-time jobs

More women than men work in part-time jobs in Iceland. According to the collective agreements betwe the social partners, part-time workers enjoy, consistent with their work proportions, all general rights, such those relating to seniority, promotion, social security and incidental benefits. There is also in effect an directive, No. 97/81, concerning framework agreements about part-time work. This directive is part of the E agreement of October 30th 1998.

The Government does not absolutely know the reason why women rather than men tend to be in part-ti employment. It is clear that the Icelandic economy is highly dependent on the work contribution of women, a unemployment has been at a very low level in recent years. In addition, the local authorities have made gr efforts to provide kindergarten places for most children in the 2-5 year age range. Some have sought to ha children start attending kindergarten even younger. There are also day-mothers working in most local governm areas; these look after children between the ages of six months and two years, or until the child is admitted kindergarten.

Furthermore, the Gender Equality Act contains provisions on the reconciliation of family and occupational obligations; this is intended to meet the rising demand by women to be accepted as fully-valid members of the workforce, and of men to play a greater role in their families (see also the discussion under para. 2, subpara. a and b).

Under the revised Gender Equality Action Programme which is valid until 2004, the Directorate of Labour, in collaboration with Statistics Iceland, is entrusted with making a survey of the importance of part-time employment and jobs executed without permanent contracts or outside normal places of work, by women on the one hand and by men on the other.

Para. 1, subpara. d)

Equal pay

Under Article 14 of the Gender Equality Act of 2000, women and men who work for the same employer are to receive equal wages and enjoy equal terms for work which is comparable and of equal value. The provision defines and explains the term "equal wages" and states that "terms" refers, besides wages, to pension rights, the right to holiday and sick leave and all other terms of employment and rights that can be evaluated in monetary terms.

Under Article 23 of the Act, discrimination in terms is prohibited; employers are forbidden to discriminate between their employees in wage payments or other terms of service on the grounds of their gender. If it can be argued that a woman and a man who work for the same employer receive different wages or terms of service for work that is comparable and of equal value, then the employer is required to demonstrate that if there is any difference, it is based on factors other than the gender of the employees.

No survey comparable to the one that was published in 1995, covering the composition of wages and gender-related wage differentials in eight private companies and public institutions, has been carried out. A few local authorities have had comparable studies made concerning their employees; all of these studies confirm the existence of wage differentials of 7%-16% between women and men, these figures referring only to differentials that can not be explained impartially.

A lot of discussion and correspondence in the press has taken place since the publication of the Gender Equality Council's survey in 1995. Gender Equality as regards wages was one of the major points of discussion when the 1997 collective agreements were negotiated.

Surveys of the Commercial Workers' Union of Reykjavik

One of the largest trade unions in the metropolitan area, the Commercial Workers' Union in Reykjavik (VR), most of whose members are women, has made regular surveys of the gender pay gap and kept up an active discussion of the issue. In 1999 it launched an extensive publicity campaign in the media highlighting wage discrimination between women and men.

The outcome of a survey made for VR in October 2001 shows that men have 24.5% higher total wages than women. When different fields of work, different working time, seniority and age have been taken into consideration, a 16% pay gap remains. According to the survey, men also have higher daytime wages by 18.3%. Again, what remains when everything is taken into account is a 16% wage difference. In a survey made for VR in 2000 the gender pay gap was 18%.

A study by Gender Equality Council and Committee on Women's Economic Situation

The Gender Equality Council and the Committee on Women's Economic Situation launched a study on the gender pay gap in September 2002. The study embraced the entire Icelandic labour market except for banks, the state and the City of Reykjavik. The study revealed that women receive 70% of men's wages. Two-thirds of this difference are explained in terms of different fields of work, the nature of jobs, education and employment terms. What is then left, about 7.5-11% wage difference, seems to exist because of marriage, childbearing and other things that seem to have different influence on women's and men's wages. But still 3% wage difference remains unexplained, according to the study.

A survey by the Confederation of University Graduates

The Confederation of University Graduates (BHM) and other trade unions have published figures on their members' wages, and wage trends, and attempts have been made to assess the effect of collective agreements on gender-related wage differentials. According to the findings of a survey of daytime wage rates that were made public at the Confederation's conference on wages and terms in spring 2000, men's daytime wages were 5.6% higher than women's.

Towards Closing the Gender Pay Gap

The Centre for Women Studies at the University of Iceland, on behalf of the Gender Equality Council participated in a European project on wage differences between women and men, *Towards a Closing of the Gender Pay Gap*, in 2002. The results show that the gender pay gap in the public labour market in Iceland is 24%, according to information from the Public Sector Labour Market Research Institute, while the gender pay gap in the private labour market is 27.4%. What made the Icelandic part of the project difficult is the lack of basic information, due to which statistics on the division of all employees between the public and the private sector in Iceland is hardly available and very difficult to assess.

In the spring of 2002 the City of Reykjavik published a new survey which revealed that the gender pay gap among its employees had been reduced by 50% and was at that time approximately 7% in favour of men.

The Government's aim is to find ways of preventing gender-related wage discrimination in Iceland. There is a general consensus regarding expectations regarding the Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave Act, especially in changing the gender-divided labour market situation. If we assume that the pay-gap and women's low representation in the top levels of business management are at least partly due to their responsibilities for family and children, this Act should result

in creating a more equal situation. The statistics imply that fathers are taking their paternity leave. In addition, reference is made to the effect that the Gender Equality Act is expected to have regarding the integration of the demands of employment and family obligations, both on women and on men.

The Equal Status Council has also been commissioned to concentrate on defining the problem and making proposals to the Government on ways to put an end to this situation.

Para. 1, subpara. e)

The Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women has criticised the Icelandic pension fund system, as it sees it as having more negative implications for women than for men. Below follows an attempt to describe the pension system in its entirety.

There are three pension schemes in Iceland: a national pension scheme, an occupational pension scheme which is a fully-funded scheme and a supplementary pension scheme.

The national pension scheme covers old age pension, invalidity pension and dependents' pension in the form of child pension. The relevant legislation is the Act on Social Security, No. 117/1993 with subsequent amendments.

Persons 67 years of age, who have been resident in Iceland for at least 3 years between the ages of 16 and 67 are entitled to an old age pension. A full annual pension is paid to those who have been resident in Iceland for at least 40 years between the ages of 16 to 66 inclusive. Shorter periods reduce the pension proportionally.

Persons resident in Iceland are entitled to an invalidity pension if they are between the ages of 16 and 67 and have been resident in Iceland for at least three years immediately prior to application and have had their permanent disability assessed at 75% as a result of a medically recognised disease or invalidity.

Child pension is paid for all children under 18 years of age if either parent is deceased or receives invalidity pension.

Pension supplement guarantees supplementation of the old age and invalidity pension to pensioners with little or no income other than the above-mentioned pension. Furthermore, according to the Social Assistance Act No. 118/1993, with subsequent amendments, an exceptional pension supplement is paid to single pensioners with little or no income other than the above-mentioned pension. Also, there is a possibility of a means-tested household supplement, which can be paid to a single person who receives a full pension supplement and lives alone without the financial support of others.

The occupational pension scheme is a fully-funded scheme governed by the Act on Mandatory Insurance of Pension Rights and on Activities of Pension Funds, No. 129/1997 (the Pension Act). According to the Act, all employees and employers or self-employed persons are obliged to ensure their pension rights through membership of an occupational pension fund from the age of 16 years until 70 years of age. Premiums must be paid on all taxable wages. Premiums to the funds must be no less than 10% of gross salary, 6% paid by the

employer and 4% by the employee. Membership of pension funds depends on the individual collective agreements between the social partners.

Boards of pension funds of which membership is compulsory under general collective agreements or law, consist of equal numbers of representatives of employees and employers. Boards of other pension funds are constituted according to the statutes of the pension fund in question.

In return for their premiums, members of occupational pension schemes become entitled to old age pensions, invalidity pensions, pensions to surviving spouses and children's pension, as appropriate; these entitlements may not be less extensive than are provided for in the Pension Act. Under Article 4, paragraph 1 of the Pension Act, the minimum insurance benefits provided by a pension fund, based on a 40-year contribution period, shall amount to 56% of the monthly wages for which contribution is paid, as a monthly old-age pension for the duration of life from such time as the pension is first paid, beginning no later than from 70 years of age, and 56% of the monthly wages for which contribution is paid, as a monthly invalidity pension based on full rights to adjustment of benefit. Minimum insurance benefits shall, furthermore, provide for the equalisation among pension fund members of costs due to spouses' pensions and costs due to children's pensions. The statutes of pension funds shall stipulate further the acquisition of rights. The age at which members may begin drawing old age pension age is normally 65 to 67.

Supplementary pension scheme: Under the Pension Act, No. 129/1997, wage-earners and employers or self-employed persons may make agreements with commercial banks, life insurance companies, securities brokerages or pension funds on additional insurance cover based on premiums that are to be devoted to the establishment of pension rights, joint or private.

The collective agreements made in the private sector in 2000 laid the basis for a special private and supplementary pension savings for wage-earners. They stated the obligation of the employer to pay a specific counter-contribution if the wage-earner requests an agreement on supplementary pension savings. Wage-earners' supplementary pension savings remain their private property, and the rules regarding how they are disposed of are more liberal than those covering ordinary pension savings. The employer's contribution depends at all times on the amount that the wage-earner decides to put into supplementary savings. Under most of the collective agreements, the employer's contribution is 2% of wages, against 2% of wages paid by the wage-earner to a pension fund. In addition, the employer is obliged to pay a contribution (which is deductible from social security tax under the Social Security Tax Act, No. 113/1990) if the wage-earner decides to pay supplementary savings. This obligatory contribution is 10% of the wage-earner's premium share, though never more than 0.4% of the base for the calculation of social security tax, i.e. the wage-earner's total wage paid by the employer. Thus, a wage-earner who pays 2% of his wages into a supplementary pension savings scheme receives a counter-contribution of 2.2% from the employer; one who saves 3% receives 2.3%, one who saves 4% or more receives 2.4% (the maximum) from the employer.

The Act No. 86/2000 amended the Income and Property Tax Act, No. 75/1981, setting forth authorisation for wage-earners to deduct supplementary pension savings of up to 4% from their taxable income. The same applies to the self-employed, and to employers.

Presumably, what the Committee is referring to is the fact that the system is based on contributions by the employee, on the one hand, and the employer, on the other, which are based on the wages of the employee in question and the length of time that he or she spends on the labour market. In this system, each participant in the labour market is obliged to pay the equivalent of 4% of his wages into a jointly-owned pension fund, together with a counter-contribution of 6% from the employer. In addition, the wage-earner may choose to pay a supplementary premium contribution, the amount of which he is free to decide, and this remains his private property. In this way, both men and women are able to earn old-age pension entitlements through their involvement on the labour market, both through their own premium contributions and those of their employers.

It is clear, on the other hand, that individual's participation in the labour market may vary, and one of the main factors here is the traditional role of women in the home and caring for children. In order to offset this, an old-age pension system was established within the social security system in order to guarantee people minimum pension rates and pension supplement, which applies to those who have little or no entitlement in the ordinary pension funds. Nor should it be forgotten that women's participation in the labour market is on a large scale, and moves have been made to equalize the family responsibilities of men and women (e.g. under the Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave Act). This is a relatively new system, so no extensive experience of it has yet been acquired, but more and more old people are acquiring better pension rights. In this context reference should also be made to case-law precedents in cases regarding the pension entitlements of couples at divorce in instances where one of the spouses has mainly been occupied in the home during the time of the marriage or cohabitation (see the discussion under Article 2).

Para. 1, subpara. f)

Sexual harassment

The former Equal Status Bureau and the Administration on Occupational Safety and Health carried out and published a study on sexual harassment in 1998. The study confirmed the existence of the problem on the labour market. One of the findings was that 36% of the participants in the study had been victims of sexual harassment at the workplace; the majority of these (93%) were women. The victims were in the younger age groups but the average age of the participants was 41. As a response to these findings, the Gender Equality Act defines and prohibits sexual harassment, *cf.* Art 17. The Act places the responsibility on employers and directors of social activities to take special measures to prevent people from being subjected to sexual harassment in the workplace, schools, etc.

The Centre for Gender Equality published a brochure on sexual harassment in 2001. The Centre has also, as a part of seminars on gender equality in enterprises and institutions, emphasized the importance of publicity on how to prevent sexual harassment and how to respond to such cases if they come up.

No court cases involving sexual harassment have yet been brought under the new Gender Equality Act, No. 96/2000. One complaint is currently before the on Gender Equality Complaints Committee. One case of sexual harassment against a woman in a workplace has been brought to court under the Penal Code.

Safety and health of pregnant women in the workplace

The Maternity/Paternity and Parental Leave Act, No. 95/2000, includes a special provision on health and safety measures relating to pregnant women, women who have recently had babies and women who are breast-feeding. When it can be considered, following a special assessment, that their safety or health is in danger, the employer is obliged to make temporary changes to their working conditions and/or working hours. If this is not possible for technical or other valid reasons, then the employer is obliged to give the woman concerned other tasks, or else grant her leave for the length of time necessary to protect her safety and health. The changes needed to the woman's working conditions and/or working hours shall not entail any changes to her wages or other work-related rights. When it becomes necessary to grant a pregnant woman leave from work for these reasons, she shall be entitled to wage payments as if she were on maternity leave.

Furthermore, special regulations, No. 931/2000, were issued, setting out measures to increase safety and health in the workplace for pregnant women, women who have recently had babies and women who are breast-feeding. These call for a special assessment of the nature of potential dangers to employees and measures to be taken following assessment. This applies to jobs which, on the basis of an assessment, are considered as entailing danger to the health of pregnant women, women who have recently had babies and women who are breast-feeding. The regulations contain further details on how it is to be decided whether it is sufficient to change the working conditions and/or working hours or whether further measures will be required. Amongst other things, they contain provisions on the right of the employer to seek the comments of the Administration of Occupational Safety and Health before a decision is taken on changing the employee's working conditions or granting her leave. The State Social Security Institute and/or the relevant employee is also able to request the Administration of Occupational Safety and Health to review the employer's decision.

In addition, it is forbidden to oblige employees in this category to work during the night during pregnancy and for up to six months following the birth of a child, providing that this precaution is necessary in the interests of the employee's health and safety and she confirms this by producing a medical certificate. These regulations incorporate Council Directive 92/85/EEC in Icelandic law.

Para. 2, subpara. a) and b)

Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave

The Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave Act, No. 95/2000, was passed in 2000 and took full effect on 1 January 2003. This constitutes a fundamental reform of the older system. The main objective of the act is to create conditions in which men and women are able to participate equally in paid employment and other

work outside the home, and to guarantee children time with both parents. The act is intended to make it easier for parents working outside the home (both mothers and fathers) to strike a balance between the demands of their careers and those of their families. Another aim is to promote a sharing of parental responsibilities and gender equality on the labour market.

The main features of the new system following the amendments are that women and men each have an equal, non-transferable, right to take three months' leave in connection with the birth, first-time adoption or fostering of a child, irrespective of whether they work in the private or the public sector, or are self-employed. They are also able to divide a further three months' leave between themselves as they wish. A parent who has been active on the Icelandic labour market for six months preceding the first day of maternity/paternity leave has the right to receive payments during the leave period. These payments amount to 80% of average gross wages or calculated remuneration over the twelve-month continuous period ending two months before the first day of the leave. A special Maternity/Paternity Leave Fund, which is financed by social security tax, was established in order to make these payments.

The emphasis is on flexibility in the taking of this leave: parents are able to take their leave in a continuous stretch, or in several shorter periods and/or to take it by working part time. Employers are obliged to make efforts to meet employees' wishes with regard to the taking of maternity/paternity leave. Mothers must, however, go on maternity leave for at least the first two weeks after the birth of a child. The right to take maternity/paternity leave expires when the child attains the age of 18 months.

The authorities and the social partners have made extensive effort in introducing the new aspects of the Act on Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave, with brochures and active information such as seminars and conferences, involving, among others, the health care service and parents themselves.

Table 9 shows the proportions of parents who took maternity/paternity leave in a single continuous period and those who chose to take it in instalments as provided for under the Act during the period.

Table 9 Patterns of maternity/paternity leave taken in 2001 and 2002 by percentage (%).

	Fathers	Mothers
Continuous	37.5	68.1
In instalments	62.5	31.9

Source: Maternity/Paternity Leave Fund

It is interesting to note that in January 2001, 22.4% of mothers divided their leave into a number of periods or took it concurrently with a reduced work time ratio, but in September the same year, 34.5% did this. The same trend was shown by fathers; 39.6% of fathers divided their leave into a number of periods or took it concurrently

with a reduced work time ratio in January and this rate had increased to 615% in September. The rapid increase in parents' use of flexible leave probably reflects due to lack of awareness of this possibility at the beginning.

Table 10 shows the pattern in the taking of paternity leave by fathers during 2001–2002, and also the average number of days they took.

Table 10 Pattern in fathers' paternity leave in 2001 and 2002, with average length in days.

	% taking less than ten days	% taking more than basic entitlement	% taking less than basic entitlement	Days (average)
Continuous	34.8	3.6	4.5	44
Instalments	61.6	10.5	5.5	55

Source: Maternity/Paternity Leave Fund

As can be seen from Tables 9 and 10, far more fathers made use of the flexibility permitted in the taking of paternity leave than took it in a single period. On average, fathers took 51 days paternity leave during the period. In this context it should be noted that fathers' independent non-transferable entitlement was 30 days in 2001 but was lengthened by one month in 2002, so becoming 60 days. The average number of days taken was 39 in 2001 and 64 in 2002. In both years, fathers took longer periods, on average, when they availed themselves of the permitted flexibility and took their leave in instalments.

More fathers took paternity leave periods that were longer than their individual entitlements in 2001 than in 2002. This is probably to be explained due to the lengthening of the paternity leave in 2002. The increase in leave taken was about 25 days.

If a new-born child needs to stay in hospital for more than seven days directly following the birth, the parents' joint right to maternity/paternity leave may be extended by the number of days the child has to stay in hospital, prior to its first homecoming, by up to four months. It is also permitted to extend the parent's joint right to maternity/paternity leave by up to three months in the case of a serious illness of the child which requires more intensive parental attention and care. Maternity/paternity leave can consequently be lengthened by up to a total of seven months in the case of the illness of a child. The mother's maternity leave can also be extended by up to two months due to a serious illness suffered by her in connection with the birth.

Maternity/paternity leave taken in accordance with the Act is calculated as working time for purposes of calculating employment-related rights, e.g. for vacation entitlement, rights connected with length of service, sick-leave, notice periods for termination, etc. Parents continue to pay pension fund premiums while on maternity/paternity leave, and the employer's complementary premium is paid by the Maternity/Paternity Leave Fund.

The Act guarantees parents who are not active on the labour market or who are in formal studies an independent right to a birth grant for up to three months each in connection with the birth, first-time adoption or permanent fostering of a child. This right may not be assigned between the parents. Furthermore, such parents have a joint right to receive a birth grant for a further three months; this may be paid to either parent or divided between both.

In addition to the rights described above, all parents now have the right to take 13 weeks' parental leave in order to care for their children. This right may not be transferred between the parents, and they are able to take this parental leave either in one continuous stretch or in shorter periods, or by reducing their working proportion. The right to take parental leave expires when the child reaches the age of 8 years. Parental leave is unpaid.

The employment relationship between employee and employer remains unchanged during maternity/paternity leave and parental leave, and employees have the right to return to their jobs at the end of the period. If this is not possible, then they are entitled to comparable positions with the employer in accordance with their employment contracts. Employees are also protected under the Act against redundancies on the grounds of taking maternity/paternity or parental leave, and the same applies to redundancy measures affecting pregnant women and women who have recently had children. An employee who violates the provisions of the act is liable to pay damages under the general rules.

Furthermore, the Gender Equality Act contains provisions on the reconciliation of family and occupational obligations; this is intended to meet the rising demand by women to be accepted as fully-valid members of the workforce, and of men to play a greater role in their families. Further references are made to the discussion under Art. 5.

Para. 2, subpara. c)

Child-care services are for the most part the responsibility of the local authorities, and fall into two types: kindergarten and day care provided in private homes by registered "day-mothers". Children generally go first to day-mothers (who take children from the age of six months) and then to a kindergarten.

Kindergartens

Provisions on kindergartens are to be found in the Kindergarten Act, No. 78/1994, and the Regulations on kindergartens, No. 225/1995. The Act states that the director and employees of kindergartens shall be qualified pre-school teachers. The regulations set out the minimum requirements regarding kindergarten buildings and the facilities they must provide, such as playrooms, facilities for rest and movement, toilet facilities for children, wardrobes and clothes-drying facilities, storage space, an interview room, communal area for meetings between parents and staff, kitchens, etc. There are also provisions on the minimum area for each child when new outdoor play areas are designed (30–40 m^2), and at no time may the space be smaller than 20 m^2 for each child. Priority is also to be given to ensuring the maximum variety in the play facilities and to ensuring that they are easy to keep

clean and tidy. The regulations state the staff-children ratios, which vary according to the age of the children, with half the number of one-year-olds per staff member as compared with five-year-olds. The highest number of children per staff member permitted under the regulations is eight.

Kindergarten is regarded as the first stage in the Icelandic school system, and the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has issued a national curriculum guide for kindergartens, consisting of a programme of guidelines intended to form a flexible framework of educational activities at kindergarten level. Each kindergarten is to organise its own activities and draw up a programme based on the aims stated in the national curriculum guide. Children of kindergarten age who need special assistance and training due to disabilities or emotional or social difficulties have the right to such assistance in kindergarten under the guidance of specialists.

Local authorities are required to appoint special kindergarten committees to monitor the application of the provisions of laws and regulations and ensure that kindergartens and primary schools operate in accordance with the educational programme for kindergartens and the general primary school curriculum guide. They are also expected to work to promote mutual contacts between the kindergartens and the primary schools in educational matters.

Day-mothers

Day-mothers who accept children for care in private homes work under the Regulation No. 198/1992 on the day care of children in private homes. The social affairs council or committee in each local government area is generally responsible for the welfare of children in the area, and issues licences for these services.

The conditions for receiving a licence under the regulations are as follows. The applicant must be aged 20 or older, have completed a special course which includes teaching about children's illnesses, First Aid and rescue techniques in the event of a fire, present a medical certificate and references from her previous employer or two responsible persons and must have satisfactory fire-prevention equipment in her home as approved by the Fire Prevention Inspectorate. In addition, the facilities must pass inspection by the local board of public health and offer satisfactory playing area for the children. Finally, smoking is not allowed in the vicinity of the children.

The maximum number of children permitted in care with a single day-mother is 5. Under the regulations, the day-mother is responsible for the children's mental and physical well being, and is bound to treat all information she receives about the children's circumstances and those of their parents or guardians in confidence. Day-mothers are also required to take out accident insurance to cover the children they have in their care. The local authority is responsible for monitoring the work of day-mothers.

Number of places - access

Under the Kindergarten Act, the operation of kindergartens is administered by the local authorities, which have considerable freedom as regards the form of the services provided. It is safe to say that the vast majority of Icelandic children attend kindergarten for some length of time before going to school. How well the municipalities manage to meet

the demand for kindergarten places varies from place to place. The official kindergarten age, i.e. the age at which children are permitted to go to a kindergarten, differs from one municipality to another, though in most it is defined as being from 2 to 6 years. A large number of local authorities offer places for children from the age of one year, but the situation varies widely from place to place, and most of these places are intended for children in various priority categories.

After- school programmes

In the elementary/compulsory school, there are after-school programmes available in many municipalities for the age groups from 6 to 9 years. However, the situation varies a lot in rural areas, some rural regions and municipalities can provide similar arrangements as mentioned above while others do not have the resources necessary to offer such services.

Para. 2, subpara. d)

References are made to the discussion under para. 1, subpara. f)

Article 12

Paragraph 1

Access to health care services

The health sector is regulated according to the Health Service Act No. 97/1990, by which all inhabitants, regardless of gender, have right of access to the best possible health service at any given time for the protection of their mental, social and physical health. The main objective of the Patients' Rights Act, No. 74/1997, is to ensure that there is no discrimination against patients on grounds of gender, religion, beliefs, nationality, race, skin colour, financial status, family relation or status in other respect.

The health service in Iceland is primarily financed by the National Government. Financing is mainly based on taxes or 85% and 15% is fee for service.

The country is divided into health care regions, each with their own primary health care centres, some of which are run jointly with the local community hospital. The primary health care centres have the responsibility for general treatment and care, examination, home nursing as well as preventive measures such as family planning, maternity care and child health care and school health care.

Report on women's health

The Minister of Health published a report on women's health in 2000. This report is the e.timation and proposals of a special committee that was appointed in 1995 to study the changes in women's health. In August 2001 the Minister of Health appointed a project committee which task is to prioritise the proposals made in the report (see Article 3).

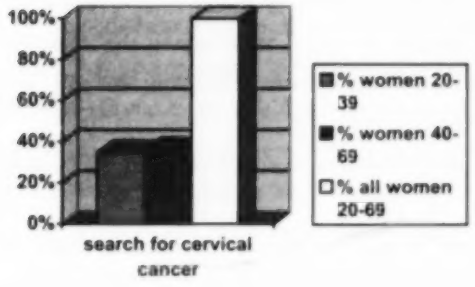
Women's health

Women as a group live longer than men and have lower mortality rates for most causes of death. However, women have higher rates of morbidity and utilization of health care services (especially related to childbirth), and they can be more affected by social welfare policies than men are. Life expectancy at birth in Iceland (1997-1998) is among the highest in the world. Infant mortality is among the lowest in the world: 5.5 per 1,000 live births. There are very few maternal deaths in Iceland and since 1991 there has been one. Average life expectancy at birth for females is 81.5 years and for males 77 years.

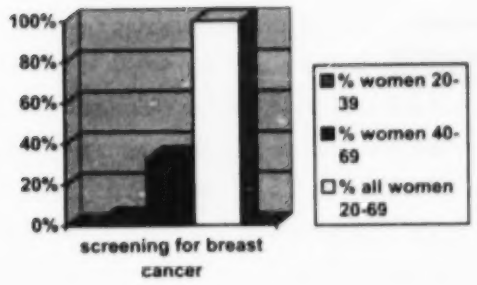
Breast and lung cancer are the most common diseases among Icelandic women and mortality from lung cancer is relatively high. Mortality from breast cancer seems to have been relatively stable from 1955 to 1985, but seems to have increased since then. Iceland's rate of mortality from cancer of the cervix is declining, although the absolute number of deaths is very low and fluctuation is large.

Since 1964 there has been a programme for searching for cervical cancer and since 1973 a programme for searching for breast cancer. Women aged 20-69 are advised to have a check for cervical cancer every other year; women aged 40-69 are advised to have breast screening/mammography every other year.

Participation rates in checks for cervical cancer in 2000 were as follows: Women 20-39: 34.7%, women 40-69: 36% (as a % of all women that age). Participation rates in screening for breast cancer in 2000: Women 20-39: 2.9%, women 40-69: 32.7% (as a % of all women that age).



This chart shows the proportion of women who had a check for cervical cancer in 2000 as a percentage of all women aged 20-69.



This chart shows the proportion of women who had breast cancer screening in 2000 as a percentage of all women aged 20-69.

The Committee on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination is concerned at the high level of alcohol consumption among women, and the level of alcohol and drug consumption among young people, including girls. The Government's health forecast for the period up to 2010 states that about 90% of Icelanders who have reached the age of 20 drink alcohol. The rate of alcoholism in Iceland has been measured at 3.5-6.3%; consumption per capita among those aged 15 and older was 5.56 litres of pure alcohol in 1998. Data on the consumption of illegal drugs is limited. The Government's aim is to cut alcohol consumption to 5.0 litres of pure alcohol per capita by those aged 15 and older by the year 2010. It is also aimed to cut underage alcohol consumption and drug abuse by 25%.

Sex education

Provision exists in law for sex education from primary school age, but implementation varies. Contraceptives are widely available and the Icelandic Association for Sexual and Reproductive Health distributes free condoms to teenagers. The Association has been active in providing sex education to young people by delivering sex education lectures and hosting discussion groups in schools and youth centres, and has also provided counselling to teenagers. Teenage girls have good access to contraceptive pills through family doctors or healthcare centres. Although the legal age is 18, the contraceptive pill can be prescribed to girls from 14 years of age without consulting the girls' parents.

Births to mothers under 20 have declined. In 1998 6.3% of live births were to mothers below the age of 20. This represents a major improvement compared with 1980, when the proportion was 13.9%. Nevertheless, the birth rate among young women is still higher than in other Nordic countries.

Table 11 Women's fertility 1996-2001

Women's fertility 1996-2001 per 1.000 women

	15-19 years
1996	22.1
1997	24.5
1998	24.1
1999	23.7
2000	22.5
2001	19.3

Table 12 Number of abortions 1996-1998

	1996	1997	1998
Under 15 years	8	11	11
15-19 years	207	217	248

HIV/AIDS and (other) sexually transmitted diseases

The National Centre for Infectious Diseases, under the Directorate of Health, handles programmes and measures to control HIV/AIDS, as well as (other) sexually transmitted diseases. The centre prepares campaigns targeted at the whole population or special groups, depending on the need for information/education. At the moment no programmes are targeted specifically at women and girls. On the Directorate's web site, information on sexually transmittable diseases has recently been updated and increased and new information material and campaigns aimed at specific groups is being prepared.

Older women

Most municipal authorities provide both social home service and health service to older women and men. Most larger towns also have social centres for the elderly. Women seem to attend these social centres more often than men. A survey was made on the use of the old people's social centre in Mosfellsbær, a small town in the capital area. It showed that 80% of the women and 60% of the men knew about the centre. Seventy per cent of the women had come to the centre and 44% of them had taken part in their activities. On the other hand, 50% of the men had come to the centre and only 22% had been active.

Paragraph 2.

Services in connection with pregnancy

Service for women in connection with pregnancy, confinement and infant health care is well organized and effective. Expectant mothers visit doctors/midwives 10-12 times. Blood pressure, weight and urine (protein) is checked each time. Women receive information on the pregnancy, birth, breast feeding and child rearing. Ultrasound examination is offered to all women. Expectant mothers over 35 years of age are offered amniocentesis to detect chromosome abnormalities. Expectant parents are furthermore offered to attend pre-natal classes. The majority of women give birth in institutions, mainly maternity wards at hospitals.

The aforementioned report on women's health recommended improvements in the service offered to women in the post-natal period; in recent years it has been increasingly recognised that women can experience serious health problems after childbirth. Recently more discussion has taken place in society about this issue. According to the report, support by the health service during breastfeeding has been insufficient. However, interest groups and self-help groups have been giving advice and publishing information on the topic.

The New Baby

A task force at the Akureyri Primary Health Care Centre developed, in the years 1992 to 1997, ways to make better use of available information to promote the all-round health of the family, both by family counselling and enhanced family support, especially for prospective and new parents.

This scheme, under the title "*The New Baby – Enhanced Family Support and Improved Relationships,*" works towards a new dimension for health prevention. The traditional work in maternal and child health care has been expanded and family counselling has been added to the programme. In 1997 the project received recognition from the WHO Regional Office for Europe.

The goal is preventive work aimed at attending not only to the physical situation, but also to psychological and social risk factors and a form of prevention that is well adapted to the different needs of the consumers. The frame of reference is that good emotional relationships are the foundation of good health.

Use is made of frequent and regular encounters in maternal and child health care, to detect and understand social and emotional risk factors and establish cooperation with the families about solutions.

Family doctors interview the expecting mothers in the maternal and child health care. The interviews take place during one of the first visits in the national maternal care programme and are the foundation for the change in emphasis. They are used to assess the need for attention, empathy and support in maternal and child health care. In addition to exploring the physical health of the mother, the interviews focus on social factors, emotional status and conditions from adolescence onwards.

Primary health care staff are trained in obtaining relevant information and disseminating it between vocational groups. Through education and supervision, the Primary Health Care Staff have learned to make better use of both their own experience and the experience of others to analyse risk factors. The emotional needs of

prospective and new parents are met in a more purposeful manner and increased to support and therapy is given for those most in need.

It has been shown that at least 30% of pregnant women are in need of increased support, crisis-solving and some kind of specialised therapy. The health gains of this project for women, children and other family members have not been measured in relation to common health indicators, but all the participants are in no doubt of the benefit of the working method.

A few other health care centres around the country are using, or preparing to use, the ideology of the "New Baby" project.

Education for prospective fathers

At several places in the metropolitan area, prospective fathers are offered a special "fathers' evening", during parental educational courses. The issues covered include fatherhood, changes in the family during pregnancy and after birth, the impact of childbirth on women and men within the family and in the world of work and also methods for fathers to develop a positive relationship to the newborn baby. In most cases, this programme was initiated by the midwives who are the instructors on these courses.

Article 13

Subparagraphs a) and b)

Reference is made to the previous reports.

Subparagraph c)

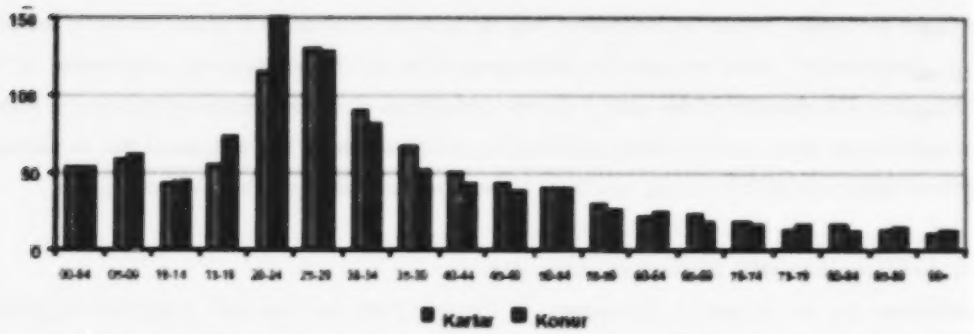
Reference is made to the discussion under Article 10, subpara. g.

Article 14

The population of Iceland in 2002 was 286,250, consisting of 142,960 women and 143,290 men. 108,250 or 37.8% of the population lives outside the capital region; of this number 51.3% are male and 48.7% female. The area outside the capital region can be described as a rural area.

Report on the status of women in rural areas

As a part of the Government's Action Programme on gender equality a report was published in June 2000 on the status of women in rural areas. The main conclusions were: Migration in the last decade of the 20th century is similar among women and men. The highest migration frequency, however, is among women between 20 and 30 years of age. Every seventh woman of that age migrates between regions. Through the years, different migration patterns between the sexes has led to imbalance in some of the rural areas.



Picture showing migration between regions per 1,000 inhabitants 1998 (purple:women/konur, violet:men/karlar). Source: Byggðabrunnur

Participation on the labour market is greater amongst women living in the capital region than in the rural areas. Unemployment during the winter is higher amongst women in the rural areas than in the capital area. In 1997 women did 43% of all work year; the proportion was 40% in the rural areas and 44% in the capital region.

The report contained no suggestions on measures to be taken to improve the status of rural women.

Gender Equality counsellor

A gender equality counsellor situated in the northwest of the country has been working on programmes to improve the situation of women in the area and to increase their opportunities to work outside of their home. Her work has been successful; she has organised projects, courses and surveys and provided personal counselling. In cooperation with the Research Institute of the University of Akureyri she initiated a study on the status of women in Northwest Iceland in 1998. The main conclusions are that women's ownership of farms is limited: they are registered owners of only 25% of the farms. Both wife and husband are registered owners in over 60% of instances. Women also seem to participate very little in agricultural policymaking: only 3% are members of committees and boards This is about the same proportion as was found in a country-wide study made in 1989. According to the 1998 study, four out of five women are completely inactive in agricultural policymaking and do not even attend meetings. These results have been made known to the Farmers' Association. The Ministry of Agriculture is preparing a project in cooperation with the Farmers' Association to make farmers of both genders aware of their social and economic rights.

As mentioned above (see Art. 3) the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Institute of Regional Development have established a position of a gender equality counsellor in the Northeast part of the country and are preparing to do so in other rural areas. The gender equality counsellor in the Northwest and Northeast are involved in a Northern Periphery project on the situation of rural women.

Women leave - men remain

In 2002, the Centre for Gender Equality in cooperation with the Icelandic Institute for Regional Research, started a study, "*Women leave - men remain*", which is a part of a Nordic programme on Welfare Research, administered by the Nordic Council of Ministers. The objective of the study is to seek explanations as to why migration frequency is higher among women than men in rural areas, in the northern regions of the Nordic countries. It is anticipated that the findings from the study will throw light on the different living conditions between women and men in the sub-Arctic region.

Committee on gender equality within the Farmers' Association

On the international day for women in agriculture, 15 October 2002, the Farmers' Association's gender equality committee held a working- and celebration day. The women set forth ideas on how Icelandic women in agriculture can, among other things, approach consumers in a new way, and also on how to empower women in agriculture, and thereby all people in agriculture, which would lead to stronger and prouder regions in rural areas. The Ministries of Agriculture, Social Affairs and Industry and Commerce have decided to support the women so that they can develop their ideas into a three-year project.

Article 15

Reference is made to the previous reports and the discussion under Art. 2.

Article 16

Reference is made to the previous reports.

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Annexes referred to in this document will be provided in English only to CEDAW experts for reference purposes.